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China

C H I N A T O U R I S M

WUDANG MOUNTAIN: Famous Taoist Land

A HAVEN ON
THE YUANJIANG RIVER

THE FOUR
MAIDENS MOUNTAIN

226

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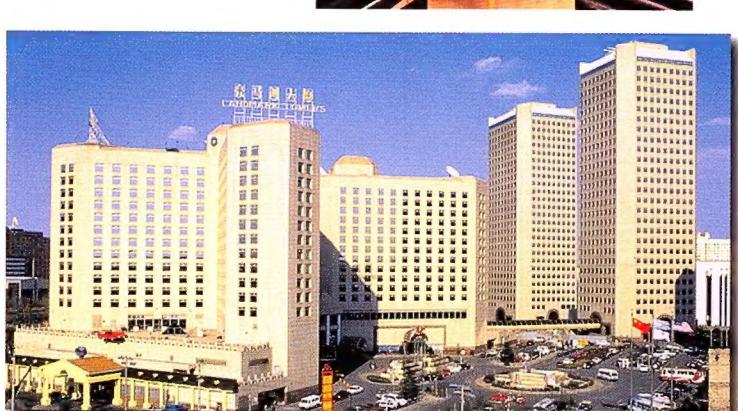
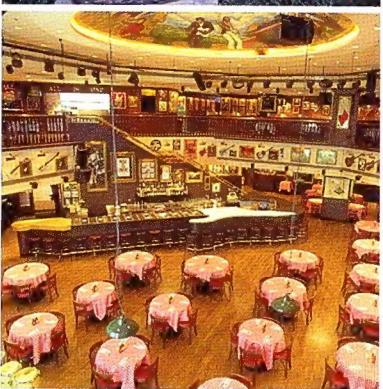
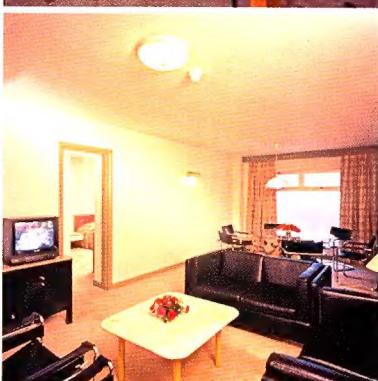
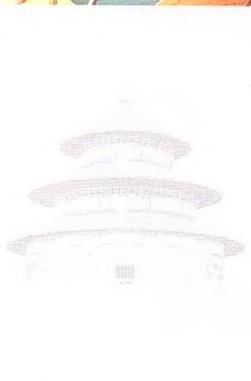
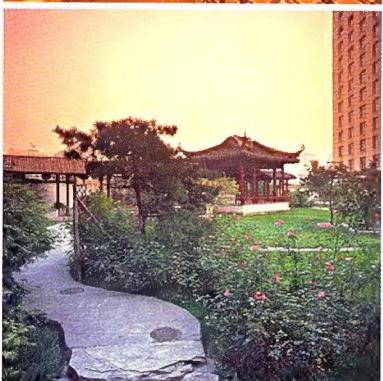
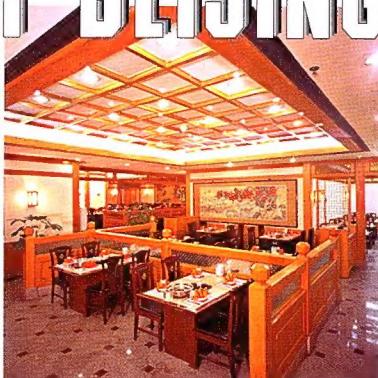
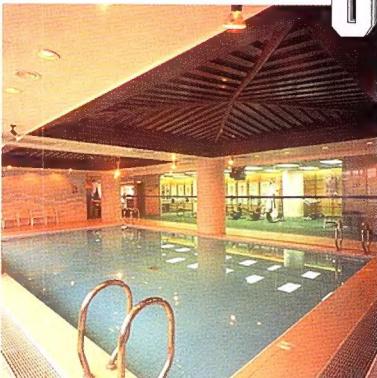
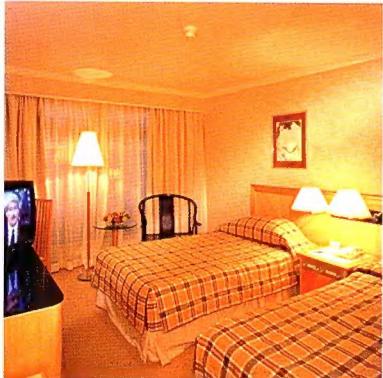
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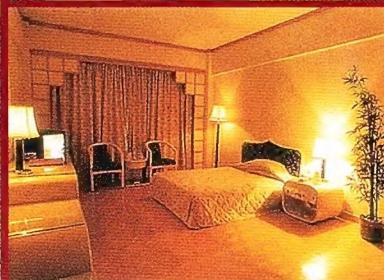


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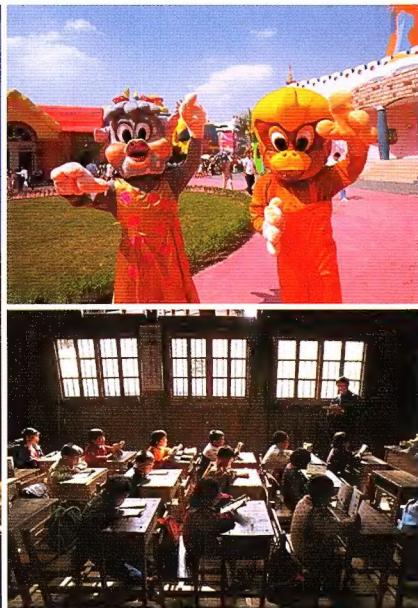
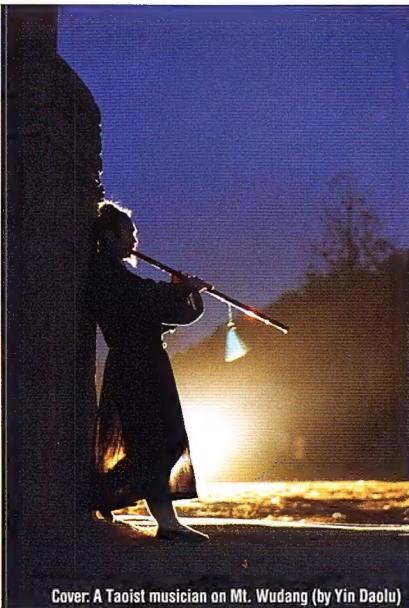
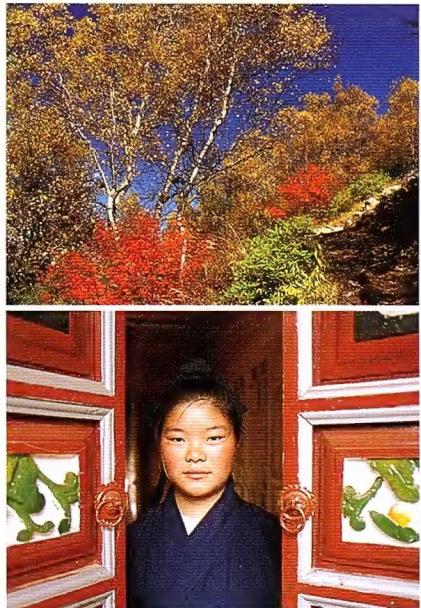
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湘江賓館熱忱歡迎您惠顧。

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Photos by Yu Zhixin, Chen Jin, Huang Yanhong
Article by Huang Yanhong

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Photos by Xie Guanghui, Yin Daolu, Shan Xiaogang
Article by Xie Guanghui

Wudang Mountain in Central China's Hubei Province is one of the four sacred Taoist lands in China. It is believed that the North God obtained the truth of Taoism and became an immortal here. The legendary martial arts hero Zhang Sanfeng, who created the Taiji

boxing on the mountain during the Ming Dynasty, added it more mysterious attraction. The scenic mountain has been listed by the UN as a world heritage.

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Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

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FROM THE EDITOR

When mentioning Taoist martial arts, most people will naturally recall the place Wudang Mountain in Central China's Hubei Province, as well as the legendary master Zhang Sanfeng and the Taiji boxing created by him. Today, this cradle of Taoist martial arts is still responsible for nourishing young kungfu talents. Apart from being the holy land of martial arts, Wudang Mountain charms people with its quaint old architecture and bewitching scenery. In the special feature, our reporter will lead you all the way up the mountain to admire the brilliant Taoist kungfu and the beauty of this Taoist sanctuary.

In fact, besides Wudang Mountain, the vast territory of China is dotted with numerous sacred places of Taoism which are well worth paying a visit.

In this issue, we also introduce two of the remarkable Shaolin disciples of the younger generation, Shi Xiaolong and Shi Xingpeng, who have both become shining kungfu stars, and a family of 16 people who went for Songshan Mountain in Henan Province to learn Shaolin martial arts techniques.

In case you are more interested in admiring natural scenery, we have prepared an alternative for you: Four Maidens Mountain in Sichuan Province. Just follow our reporter into the mountainous region to explore the charm and serenity of this haven of peace.

Looking for a downed WWII airplane may sound more challenging to some readers. We will share with you a story of a veteran American pilot looking for a lost plane. Fletcher Hanks, the 80-year-old hero of this story, went on an arduous journey to look for a cargo plane which crashed on Gaoligong Mountain in Yunnan half a century ago. You will not want to miss this adventurous yet touching story.

Photo by Yin Daolu



Website/Museum

Admiring Chinese Arts on the Internet

Good news for cultural relics lovers: now you can sit comfortably at home in front of your computer to admire Chinese art objects of various dynasties anytime you like. At the homepage "Eyewitness Ancient China — Chinese Arts" (<http://npm.ccl.itri.org.tw/itri/english/eaceng.htm>), pictures of a considerable number of works of art together with detailed descriptions are provided.

The information is categorised according to "Dynasty" and "Items", with

"Dynasty" ranging from the New Stone Age to the Qing, and "Items" divided into bronzes, jades, porcelain, objets d'art, calligraphy, and painting. If you want to know more about, say, the inkstone once used by Wen Tianxiang, a prime minister of the Song Dynasty, you can select "Song" and "Objets d'art", and then the corresponding picture and a description about the origin and functions of the article will appear. Different angles of the objects are shown, and the pictures can be magnified as well, allowing a clearer observation.

Highlights of these precious heritages of the country include the Han-dynasty jade pendant with a tiger decoration, the Tang-dynasty painting *A Palace Concert*, and the Qing-dynasty jade cabbage.

Shopping/Xi'an

The Qin Terra-cotta Figurines Market in Xi'an

Xi'an, one of the ancient cities of China, is renowned for its Museum of Terra-cotta Warriors & Horses. In fact, tourists should not miss the Qin terra-cotta figurines market outside the museum either. Several dozen stalls selling similar merchandise gather in the marketplace, hence the keen competition. It is advisable to spend some time strolling around the area first to look for the least expensive goods. Bargaining is undoubtedly essential here. For example, a whole set of terra-cotta warriors and horses marked at the price of 35 yuan may be reduced to just 25 yuan after bargaining. Apart from the figurines, dates, one of Xi'an's local products, are also a must-buy in the market. They sell at 8 yuan per kilogram here, but cost five times more for those in vacuum packing in the department store.

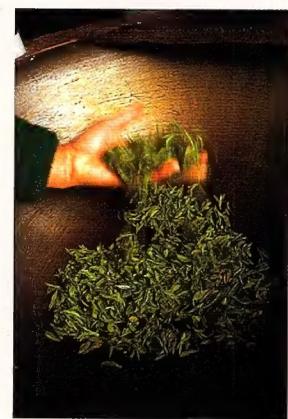


Shopping/Hangzhou

Tealeaves Baking Demonstration

Hangzhou's West Lake bewitches tourists with its picturesque scenery. The city's local product, Longjing tea, is a popular souvenir for travellers. However you may not be aware that some peddlers at West Lake may sell fake Longjing tealeaves.

To buy real Longjing tealeaves, you are recommended to visit Hangzhou Longjing Tea Store on Yan'an Road Central in the city. Spring is the time when new tealeaves of extraordinary quality are launched on the market. During this season, the shop also offers a tealeaves-baking demonstration by tea farmers, which makes your shopping experience a pleasant and remarkable one.



Tips/Beijing

Taxi Services in Beijing

It is sometimes inevitable on the journey to need a taxi. Since it is unpredictable when you will run into a deceitful taxi driver, it is necessary to know more about the taxi services of your destination before setting off. Taking Beijing as an example, there are some 70,000 taxis of three categories in the city: the first type, 1.8 yuan per kilometre with a flag fall of 12 yuan; the second type, 1.2 yuan per kilometre with a flag fall of 10.4 yuan; and the third type, the mini van, known as *mandi* to Beijingers, 1 yuan per kilometre with a flag fall of 10 yuan for the first 10 kilometres. All three categories are installed with a meter. If you come across any kind of troubles, jot down the taxi's registration number and call the complaint hotline at 6601 2620.

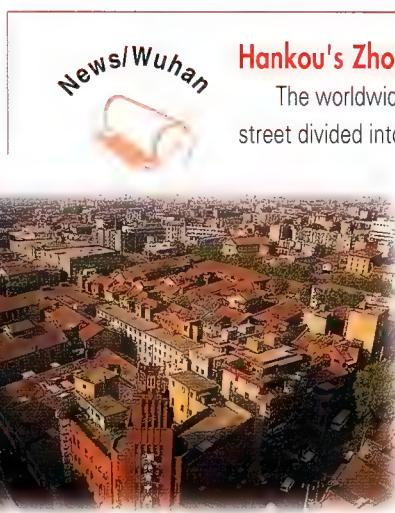


Jiangsu Launching 20 Ecotour Items

In respond to the country's Ecotour Travel Activity in 1999, Jiangsu Province has launched its ecotour proposal which covers 20 various ecotour items. They include Emperor Qianlong's sightseeing route in Yangzhou, ancient canals cruises, a visit to the capital of pottery — Yixing, scientific-research tour of rare and endangered plants in Zhenjiang's Baohua Mountain, Back to Nature Tour of Liyang's Tianmu Lake, Gaoyou Lake Fishing Village Tour, Huaiyin and Huaihe River Scenic Tour, Water-land and Reed Groves Tour in Changshu, as well as Shanghu Lake Snow-admiring and Bird-viewing Tour in Suzhou.



Jiangsu Province will also celebrate 19 major festivals this year, including Nanjing International Plum Blossom Festival, Wuxi Taihu Lake International Fishing Festival, Yangzhou Qionghua Art Festival, Jinling Lantern Festival, Shicheng City Local Customs Festival, Suzhou Water Village Fishing Rally, Taihu Lake and Xishan Mountain Plum Blossom Festival, Zhouzhuang International Travel and Art Festival, and Suzhou International Silk Fair.



Hankou's Zhongshan Boulevard — a Combination of Nostalgia and Modernity

The worldwide famous Zhongshan Boulevard in Hankou, Wuhan, will take on a new look: a commercial and scenic street divided into the historical section at the east end and the modern section on the west is due for completion in October this year.

A renowned commercial street in Wuhan, Zhongshan Boulevard was where the concessions of foreign powers were found in the past. The alteration will take place in the busiest section of the boulevard starting from Liudu Bridge to Nanjing Road, totalled 1.23 kilometres long, with the Jiali Square serving as the division of nostalgia and modernity. In the modern section, evergreens will be planted on both sides of the boulevard to replace the French parasol trees; buildings will be redecorated; colourful bricks will be paved on the boulevard; and facilities like kiosks and bus-stops will be renovated, all together adding a brand new flavour to the area. On the historical section, on the other hand, 15 old architectural structures such as the Nanyang Building and the Water Tower will serve to bring about a note of nostalgia.



Sports City Cafe in Beijing

When talking about sports cafes, you may immediately think of the famed All Star Cafe in New York run by several sports stars. Now, a sports cafe has also landed in Beijing. It is Sports City Cafe located on 3/F Gloria Hotel, 2 Jianguomen Street South, which offers typical American food.

The cafe is not only characterised by its sports-related decor, but is remarkable for being equipped with a small-scale basketball court for customers to exhibit their skills. This "cafe stadium" is also complete with a small-scale golf course, a billiards room, a darts game corner, car-racing game machines and many others to cater for other sports aficionados.

The most interesting point is that the "referee" waiter will display a "red card" as your "sending off" from the cafe when you pay your bill.



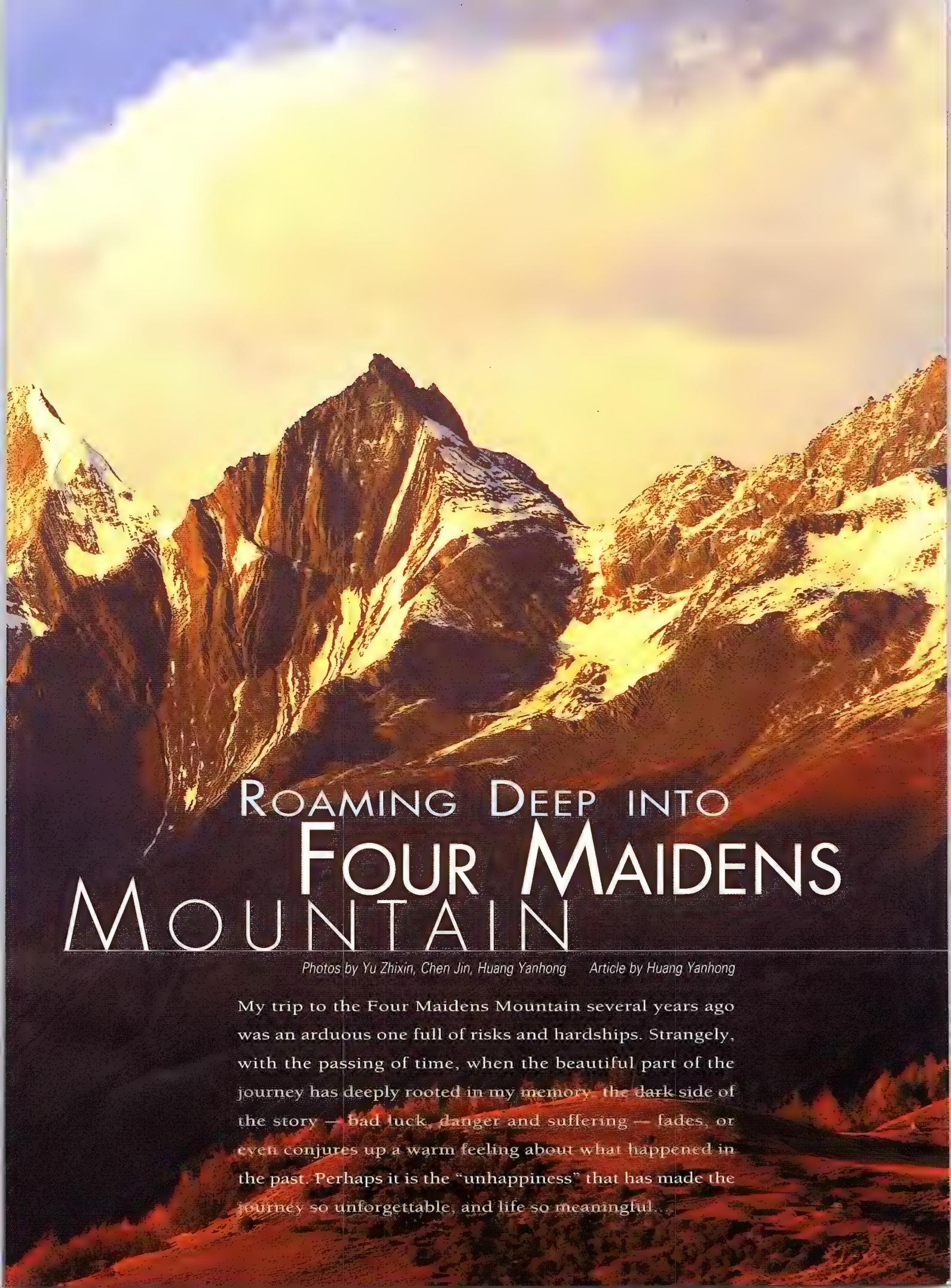
Xining-Lhasa Air Route Launched by China Southwest Airlines

The first air route traversing the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau of China has been launched by China Southwest Airlines since February. This route from Xining to Lhasa links up Qinghai and Tibet, improving the air transport conditions between the two cities on either side of the "roof of the world". Now tourists can fly from Xining to Lhasa in just two hours and 20 minutes; previously it was a two- to three-day drive between the two cities.

Meanwhile, another route connecting Beijing and Xining has also started operation to facilitate passengers flying from the capital to Tibet. The launching of this new route brings domestic Lhasa-bound air routes to a total of six.







ROAMING DEEP INTO FOUR MAIDENS MOUNTAIN

Photos by Yu Zhixin, Chen Jin, Huang Yanhong Article by Huang Yanhong

My trip to the Four Maidens Mountain several years ago was an arduous one full of risks and hardships. Strangely, with the passing of time, when the beautiful part of the journey has deeply rooted in my memory, the dark side of the story — bad luck, danger and suffering — fades, or even conjures up a warm feeling about what happened in the past. Perhaps it is the “unhappiness” that has made the journey so unforgettable, and life so meaningful...



*Though cold, hungry
and tired, we still insisted
on watching the sunrise.
Through appreciative
eyes, we saw the Four
Maidens Mountain
being lit up inch by inch
by the morning sun and
felt increasingly happy
and free.*

Starting with a Breakdown

After leaving Chengdu at the bottom of the Sichuan Basin, we were at last free from rain and overcast skies. Having started late in a less-than-perfect van, we were still crawling like a snail on Balang Mountain in the dark. As we climbed higher on the abruptly-rising mountain on the edge of the Sichuan Basin, the van chugged more and more heavily until it finally stopped at 4,000 metres. While the driver was tinkering with the engine, we climbed out into the bitter cold world of ice and snow. The gloomy moon casting its faint light around us, and we saw heavy accumulations of snow on the roadside and in the ravines. After being in the open for only a few minutes, we scrambled back into the van, for the cold was unbearable.

Fearful of oxygen starvation inside the van, we opened the window now and then; but when the fresh air came in, the bitter cold came in with it.

At first light the driver tried again to repair the engine and melt snow for the water tank. After several attempts, the engine began to roar to our heartfelt cheers. We quickly drove to the highway opposite the Four Maidens Mountain before sunrise. Though cold, hungry and tired, we still insisted on watching the sunrise. As we had been freezing for a whole night, what more harm was there in staying a little longer in the cold? Through appreciative eyes, we saw the mountain being lit up inch by inch by the morning sun and felt increasingly better, happier and free. It was a small compensation for our setback the previous night.

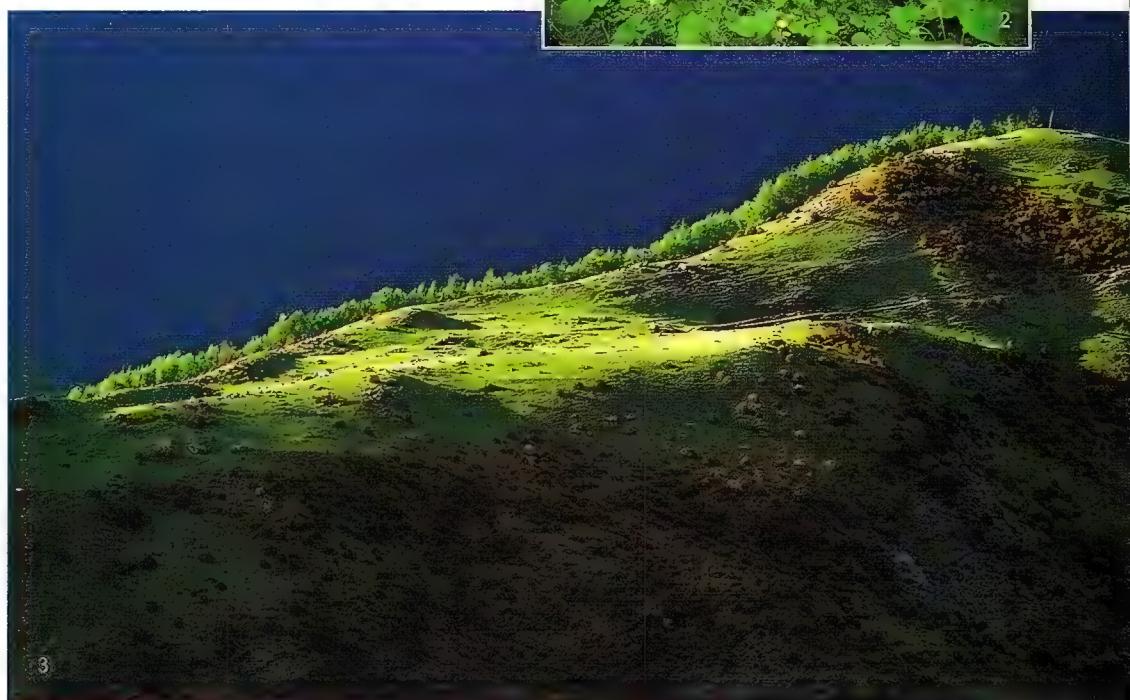
A Night on Balang Mountain

The result of the driver's attempt to repair the engine was disheartening. In the cold and the dim light, he could not fix it. To prevent damage to the water tank from freezing, he had to empty it. As the hood came down with a loud clang, my heart sank too; it meant we had to stay overnight on the snowy mountain. Luckily we had a gas heater to keep warm and to melt snow to fill the tank the following morning.

The night seemed too long and cold. We chatted and told stories at first but soon lapsed into silence as we huddled up to keep warm and wait for daylight.

Previous page: The four eternally snow-capped mountain peaks stand like four elegant maidens. (by Yu Zhixin)

1. Autumn is a season of rich colours. (by Chen Jin)
2. In summer, the mountain slopes are a dense green. (by Chen Jin)
3. One has to climb over this ridge before entering the Lake Gully. (by Guo Ji)
4. Pinnacles as seen from the Twin-Bridge Gully (by Yu Zhixin)







The seven of us, four men and three women, had to sleep in a row on the floor in a villager's home. Being the oldest and seemingly the best-behaved man, I was put between the men and the women.

A Riot of Colours in Lake Valley

The attraction of Haizigou (Lake Gully) is in its name. After descending from Balang Mountain, the first fork in the road branches off to Lake Gully. We heard that the valley leads directly to the foot of the Four Maidens Mountain. With a number of picturesque lakes, it is full of rustic charm, and there are also yak shelters where one can pass the night.

Autumn was really beautiful here. We decided to walk into the valley and enjoy the autumn scenery of withered grass and yellow leaves in a splash of gold and a riot of colours. The valley was beautiful whichever way you looked.

No sooner had we started than the drizzle began. Dark clouds rolled in, obscuring the distant Four Maidens Mountain. On the steep path we soon began to gasp for oxygen at this high altitude. But with everything so new to us, the valley still echoed with our laughter as we talked about staying the night in a yak shed.

Despite the drizzle, the meadows, streams and

dense virgin forests were picture perfect and our camera shutters clicked repeatedly. Weather on the high plateau is like a child's face; it changes suddenly without warning. A gust of strong wind turned the drizzle into large flakes of snow that fell on the yellow and green wilderness and soon transformed the valley into a silvery white world.

A Villager Came to Our Rescue

The path was soon covered by heavy snow, and we could only grope our way forward. After several hours, there was still no sign of lakes, nor yak sheds. The realisation that we must have lost our way caused great anxiety. The heavy snow, fierce wind and low clouds limited our visibility. At 4 p.m., it was already as dark as dusk. Finally, we found a yak shed and slipped inside. But we were utterly disappointed; the roof was damaged and wind blew in through the cracks in all four walls. The pile of firewood outside was wet through and could not be kindled. We worried that we might never wake up



again if we slept there that night.

In this desperate situation we decided to walk back, retracing our own footprints. But the footprints soon disappeared. Thus, we stood on the mountain slope and shouted at the top of our voices, "Help! Help!" The valley of flying snow echoed with our piercing cries, a duet in male and female voices.

Our cry for help was answered at last. Following the direction of the answer, we found our saviour — a young man who had come into the valley to look for his yaks. He did not find his yaks but found us instead. This warm-hearted young man kindly helped us carry our packs and led the way. In our seemingly hopeless situation, we followed him closely, not daring to lag behind. When we caught sight of the village lights, we all breathed a sigh of relief and counted who tumbled the most times. The champion suffered nearly 20 falls.

Unusual Food for Supper

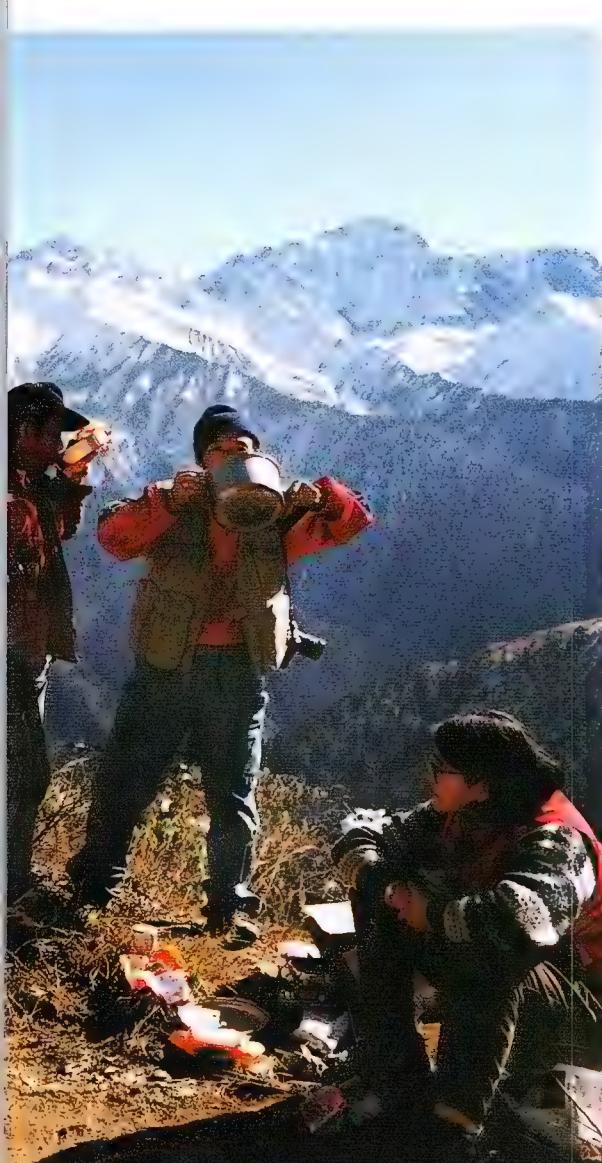
Coming out of the Lake Gully, we followed our saviour

to his house. Mr. Yang and his family lived quite prosperously by farming, herding and hunting. His father was a good hunter. His shotgun hung on the wall along with several photographs of him taken with visiting photographers. He said he also knew quite a number of artists. We were lucky that day for the old Mr. Yang had just killed a bear in the valley. (We heard later that for wildlife protection, hunting is now restricted there.). On the dinner table there was a dish of quick-fried bear meat; it was rather tough but tasted good. Afterwards we remembered with fear our afternoon in the valley. If the bear had crossed our path and not old Mr. Yang's, we and the bear might have changed places from being "the eater" to "the one being eaten".



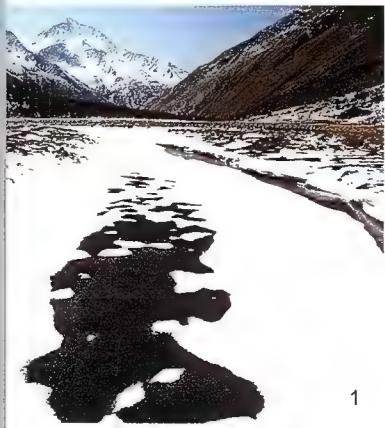
Bicycling Downhill

It was fine the following day so we decided to disperse to see the sights in the area. Miss Zheng and I went to Shuangqiao (Twin-Bridge) Gully, where we rode on a villager's tractor to a place called Renshenguo Plain. It was a quiet place of poetic beauty between mountains. There were clusters of shrubbery, with a stream winding by and a herd of yaks ambling among them. In the distance were snow-capped mountain peaks, majestic and cold. The groves of golden firs,



1. **The mountain forest turns white after the first snow. (by Huang Yanhong)**
2. **Picnicking at 4,000 metres above sea level. Our appetite was not affected by the lack of oxygen. (by Huang Yanhong)**
3. **The highway winds its way up the Balang Mountain. (by Huang Yanhong)**
4. **The Twin-Bridge Gully used to be full of trees but now many have been felled. (by Huang Yanhong)**





1

After walking several kilometres, there were no more signs of human habitation. As we proceeded, the place looked like virgin land with marshes, ancient trees, moss and old vines. We saw an abandoned Lamaist temple and grazing yaks occasionally.

back-lit by the sun, were like fire balls. After taking a short rest, we hitched a ride on a timber-transport truck to the bottom of the valley, where the scenery was even more beautiful.

Down on our luck on the way back, we walked 10 kilometres without seeing a single vehicle. Tired out, we sat by the roadside to catch our breath and suddenly heard the sound of bicycles coming towards us. At our beckoning, two mountain villagers jumped off their bicycles. We asked them to carry us and offered to pay. As one of them had just learned to ride, he could not carry someone on the luggage carrier. So I rode one of the bikes with Miss Zheng on the back, and the two villagers doubled up. It was downhill all the way.

The sharp incline, many turns and uneven surface made it a scary ride. The worst thing, however, was that the brakes did not work properly. Even pulling on the brake handles all the way, the bicycle still would not stop. Rocks flew in all directions as the tyres rolled over them. I was afraid that we would be thrown off at any moment. In the deepening darkness I could not see clearly and soon lost what little confidence I had; I never relaxed my hold on the brakes all the way down. I mentally prepared myself to crash into the mountain rather than roll off the cliff, if necessary.

In contrast to my excessive nervousness, Miss Zheng was calm. Except for an occasional "Ow!" when she was jolted, she showed no sign of alarm at all. When it became really dark, I took the first opportunity to get off the bicycle and we walked the last two kilometres. I was holding the bike's brake handles so long and so hard, I could not straighten my fingers. My hands had become chicken's claws.

Mr. Chen Tended the Fire Well

We learned our lesson. When we went to Changpinggou (Long-Plain Gully), we borrowed a pot from a local resident, bought some rice and vegetables and asked a villager to be our guide. We also hired two yaks to carry our packs. There were scattered fields and households in the beginning of the valley. The houses and courtyard walls were built entirely of stone and painted on the outside with abstract designs of religious significance. Some children soon began to follow us, running here and there. The older ones even asked us politely to take their photos. It was a pity that we could not visit a villager's home, but there was no time.

After walking for several kilometres, there were



no more signs of human habitation. A group of buildings in ruins caught our eyes. The guide told us it was an abandoned Lamaist temple. As we proceeded, the place looked like virgin land with marshes, ancient trees, moss and old vines. Occasionally there were yaks grazing on a meadow in a forest. With the guide and the yaks, we covered a distance of more than 20 kilometres and reached our destination without incident. After the guide left with his yaks, we started a fire, cooked a meal in the open air and enjoyed a romantic picnic.

With difficulty we found a yak shed to sleep in that night. Although wind blew in through the cracks in the walls, we had to make do. We pulled a big withered tree trunk into the shed over the fire with half of it outside the door. As Mr. Chen was the most experienced, he looked after the fire and kept pulling the tree trunk further inside.

In the daytime, we climbed the mountain, took photographs and saw the sights with infinite interest. At night, we sang and danced around a bonfire and whiled away the cold and long night. As food was not cooked properly at the high altitude and we were not as adept as our ancestors in the wilderness, we all had digestive problems. After two days, we had to call an end to our



unforgettable journey into the Long-Plain Gully.



Translated by Ling Yuan

1. In winter, as few tourists come, the area is very quiet and deserted. (by Chen Jin)
2. Walking into a virgin thicket of shrubs (by Huang Yanhong)
3. The ruins of a Lamaist temple in the Long-Plain Gully (by Yu Zhixin)

Tips for Travellers

The Four Maidens Mountain lying between Wenchuan and Xiaojin counties in Sichuan Province extends from the north to the south for 3.5 kilometres. Its four cloud-enshrouded and eternally snow-capped peaks are like four elegant maidens who appear and disappear as the clouds drift by.

The Four Maidens Mountain, the summit of the Qionglai Mountain, is noted for its soaring peaks, steep slopes, deep forests and rushing streams. In this scenic area are the Lake, Long-Plain and Twin-Bridge gullies, each different in its scenic and rustic beauty. All three converge on the town of Rilong in Xiaojin County. The Long-Plain and Lake gullies are bases for mountaineering, exploration and scientific investigation open to foreigners. As there are no highways into the valleys, travellers must be prepared to walk.

The Four Maidens Mountain is about 230 kilometres from Chengdu. A regular bus departs from Chengdu's West Gate Bus Station to Xiaojin County at 6:40 a.m. every morning. Fare for the whole-day journey is 30 yuan. After getting off at Rilong, visitors can stay at a hostel in town or at the forestry farm's hostel at the entrance to the Twin-Bridge Gully a few kilometres away. Visitors who plan to tour the Twin-Bridge Gully should charter a motor vehicle, which costs 70 yuan per person; the trip requires one to two days. Those who want to tour the Lake and Long-Plain gullies should note that they need at least four days because the scenic areas are located at about 3,000 metres above sea level. As the local lodging conditions and food are rather poor, one must be physically fit and ready to stand hardships. Visitors can also rent a horse from a local villager or from the Rilong hostel, at a rate of 100 yuan per day.

Sketch Map of the Four Maidens Mountain



Location of the Four Maidens Mountain



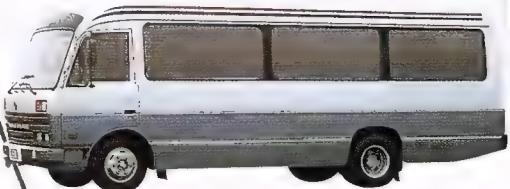
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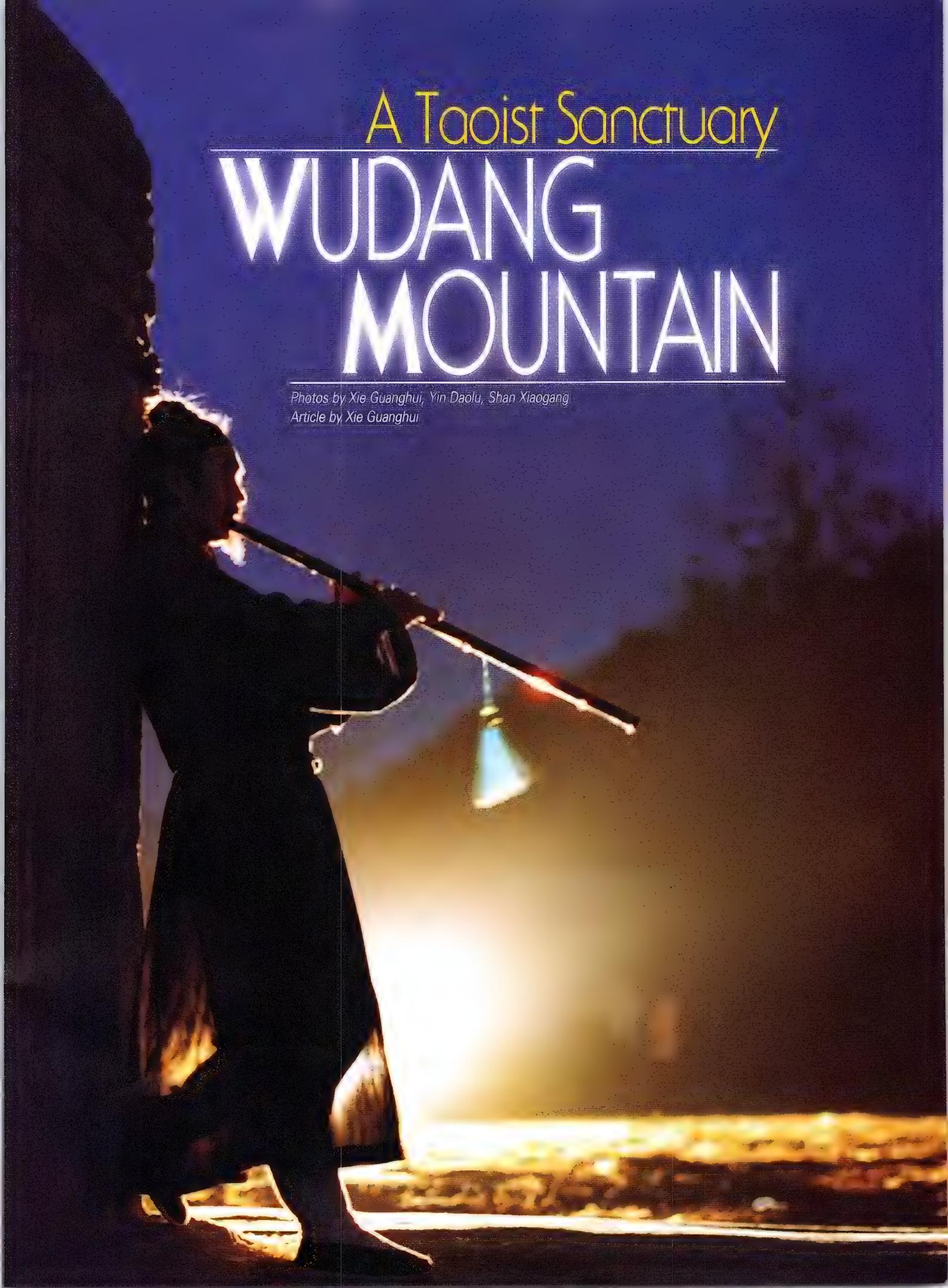
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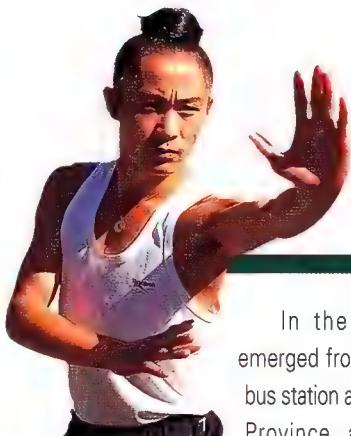
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A Taoist Sanctuary

WUDANG MOUNTAIN

Photos by Xie Guanghui, Yin Daolu, Shan Xiaogang
Article by Xie Guanghui





Early in the Ming Dynasty, the legendary hero Zhang Sanfeng built a temple-abode on Wudang Mountain and founded the original Taiji-style martial arts.

In the early morning I emerged from the long-distance bus station at Danjiangkou, Hubei Province, after an overnight journey. The station gate was crowded with people holding name boards and shouting incessantly: "Wudang Mountain!" In the madness a man and woman in their thirties virtually dragged me into a dilapidated van. Seeing the vehicle was already full, I intended to withdraw, but the door was quickly slammed shut with the woman conductor standing behind me. The driver shifted a parcel to make room for me on the gear-box cover. Before I could sit down I was thrown back like a tree uprooted, as the van shot off on its way. At Wudangshan Town on the northern side of the mountain, a few passengers disembarked, and two young fellows speaking in a Wuhan dialect came in, recounting heroes' tales. They were admirers of Zhang Sanfeng, the legendary ancient hero and founder of the Taiji-style martial arts. During the early Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Zhang Sanfeng built a temple on Wudang Mountain and established the original-style Taiji boxing by combining the essential elements of Taoist meditation with the Trigrams, the Five Elements, and yin and yang. Over the years, this school of martial arts evolved into many different styles.

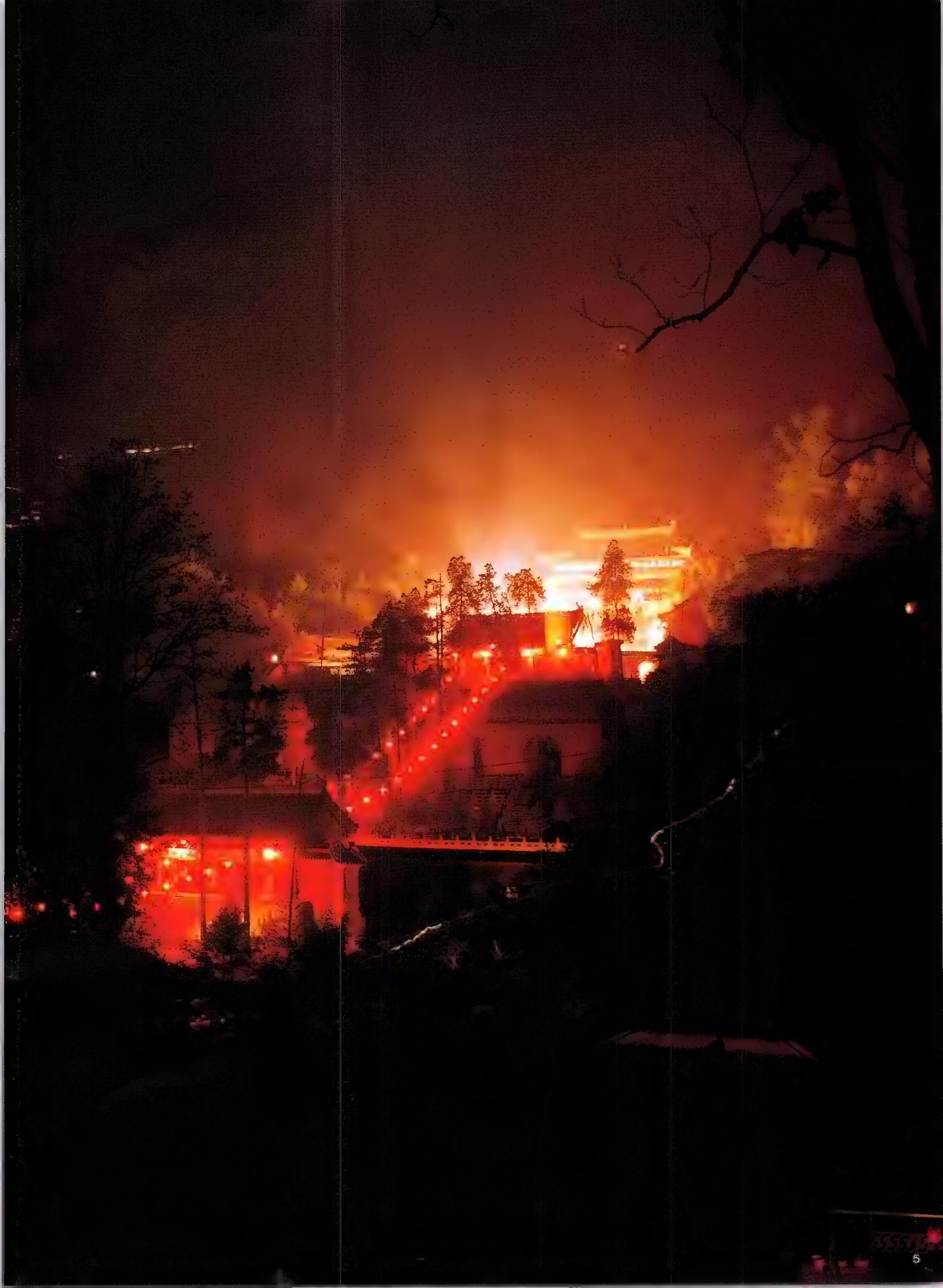
Zhang Sanfeng's martial arts, which follow the principle of subduing the powerful with softness and attacking only after being attacked, is described as "walking like a snake and moving like a feather". As we passed the Wudang Mountain archway, they both stared in wide-eyed curiosity, as if trying to locate the mountain's magic power.

We continued across the Jianhe Bridge and past a footpath with 18 turns and twists, and entered the Celestial Pass. Before long the Zixiao (Purple Cloud) Palace emerged — rows of buildings piled up on the mountain's contours. In front



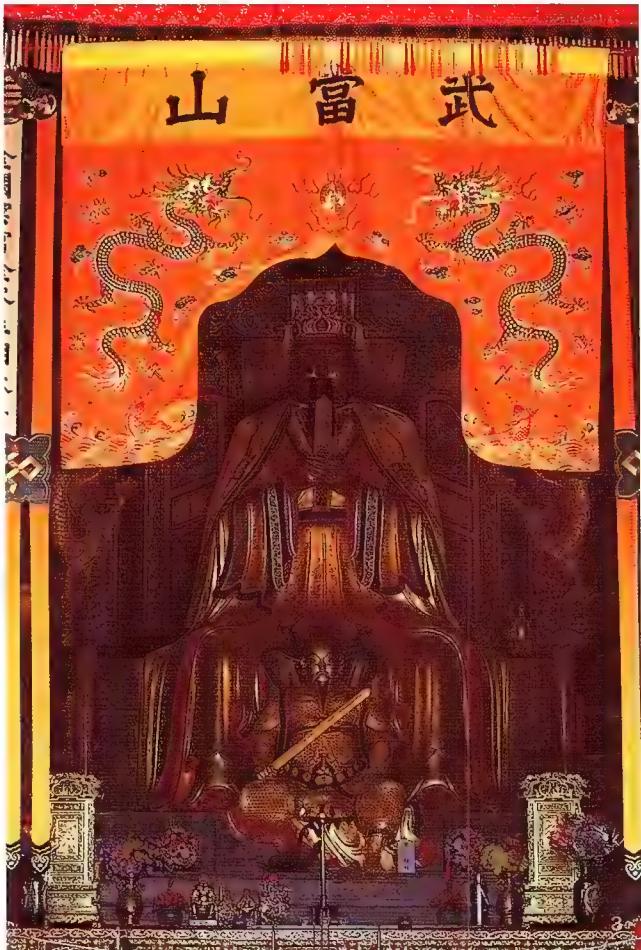
Previous page: A Wudang Mountain monk plays a vertical flute at sunset. This is a major instrument in the music of Taoism. (by Yin Daolu)

1. Neijia-style boxing is representative of Wudang martial arts.
2. The Purple Cloud Palace consists of rows of buildings constructed on a mountain slope. (by Xie Guanghui)
3. Over the past 2,000 years, many famous Taoists have stayed on Wudang Mountain. (by Xie Guanghui)
4. Two teenagers practising martial arts outside the Purple Cloud Palace (by Xie Guanghui)
5. The Purple Cloud Palace which is brilliantly lit up every evening (by Yin Daolu)





Nanyan Palace, one of nine on Wudang Mountain, was where the North God practised Taoism and attained immortality.



1. One of the huge stone tablets at Yuxu Palace (by Shan Xiaogang)
2. The flute is also used in Taoist music. (by Xie Guanghui)
3. The Jade Emperor worshipped in the Grand Hall of the Purple Cloud Palace (by Xie Guanghui)
4. A Taoist sacrificial ceremony (by Yin Daolu)
5. Pilgrims showing respect for the North God (by Yin Daolu)

of the palace gate opened on vermilion walls, we saw a Taoist priest, his hair coiled atop his head, coaching a team of teenagers in the Neijia-style martial arts. This style features movement as swift and smooth as a shooting star. The rhythm is perfect, with strength skilfully camouflaged in seeming softness.

A Visit to the Celestial Abode

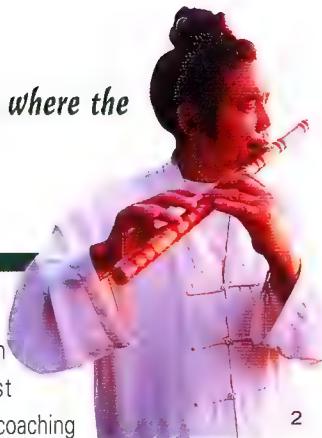
At Nanyan Palace, our destination, the driver shouted, "Here we are!" I climbed out and began roaming around. Nanyan is a tiny town bustling with activity. The streets are lined with inns, shops and restaurants in Ming and Qing styles. Beyond, as befitting the place's prestige as a celestial world, the ravines are enveloped in mist, with the faint forms of Taoist temples, terraces and towers poised on the brow of sheer cliffs like heavenly palaces. The air reverberates with the melodious notes of Taoist music from flutes, vertical flutes, bamboo pipes, trumpets and some stringed and percussion instruments. The



homespun garments and puttees.

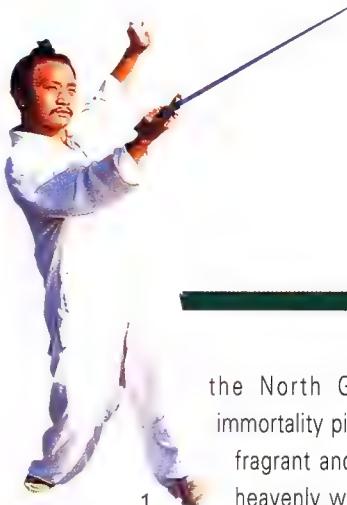
The Nanyan Palace is one of the nine palaces on Wudang Mountain. Legend says that this was where the North God practised asceticism and achieved immortality. I strolled through the Southern Heavenly Gateway, descended a stone stairway, and entered Longhu (Dragon and Tiger) Hall by an ancient celestial path tucked under thick foliage. Outside the hall, some visitors were leaning over a hexagonal balustrade surrounding a well. One fetched a pail of water from the well and took a few noisy gulps. "How sweet!" he said. He then proceeded to fill up his own bottle with the water and the onlookers did the same. A Taoist priest who happened to be fetching water there laughed loudly and was immediately bombarded with questions about the well.

"The deep well's surface is filled with jade ripples. This is where



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air is permeated with the fragrance of burning incense sticks. Now and then I saw Taoist monks pass by, looking spiritual in their trademark



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the North God made his immortality pills. The water is fragrant and sweet like old heavenly wine, All desire a cup to treat their ills." After citing the lines written by Luo Tingzhen of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) in a eulogy of this well, the Taoist monk left, carrying two pails of water with a shoulder pole.

On the UNESCO World Heritage List

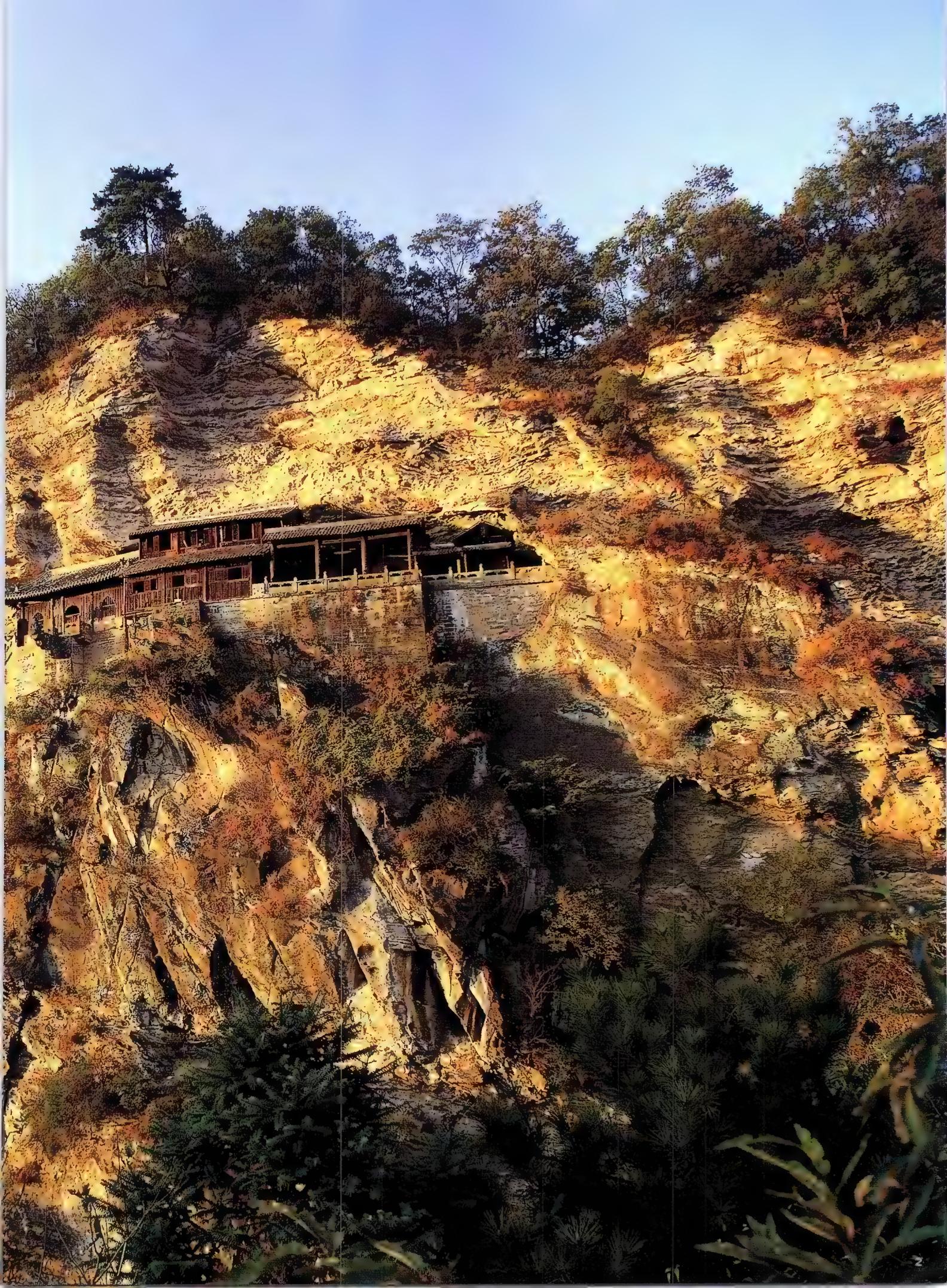
I followed the stone stairway and passed through the crumbling walls and ruins of the Nanyan Palace. The vista eventually broadened onto a smudge of mountains shimmering behind cottony clouds. As I mounted the "celestial path", the wind howled in my ears. The Stone Hall of Nanyan, poised on the brow of a perpendicular cliff, suddenly came in sight. Looking at it closely, I found everything of the hall — pillars, beams, arches, doors and windows — were created out of rock. The craftsmanship is superb. Small wonder that five years earlier, at the 18th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee held in Paris, a resolution was endorsed to put Wudang Mountain's ancient buildings on the list of world cultural heritage sites along with the Potala Palace of Lhasa, the Confucian Temple, Mansion and Graveyard of Qufu, and the Royal Summer Resort of Chengde.

The Stone Hall is enshrined with gilded bronze statues of several dozen Taoist deities, including the God of the Prime Origin and the North God; on the cliffs are also 500 gold-gilded iron statues of the heavenly officials, each about 30 centimetres tall. All the statues are proportionate and well-rounded images, as if they were really alive.

Looking over the railings to the bottom of the ravine, a spooky feeling welled up inside me. On the edge of the cliff, a stone sculpture of a dragon head, three metres tall and as thick as a telephone pole, is

1. A Wudang monk playing Taiji sword (by Xie Guanghui)
2. The beautiful scenery of Nanyan (South Rock) (by Yin Daolu)







Five years ago, the ancient buildings of Wudang Mountain appeared on the UNESCO list of world cultural heritage sites along with the Potala Palace of Lhasa, the Confucius Mansion, Temple and Graveyard of Qufu, and the Royal Summer Resort of Chengde.



1. Wudang Mountain is thronged with pilgrims on the Chinese New Year's Day. It is believed that a prayer to the North God on this day can guarantee safety in the coming year. (by Yin Daolu)

2. The board inscribed with the characters meaning "Imperial Prayer Hall" is decorated with exquisite carvings of Taoist art. (by Xie Guanghui)

3. The Purple Golden City situated on the top of Tianzhu Peak is surrounded by walls totalling 1.5 kilometres long. (by Yang Zeshan)

4. Daily necessities of Taihe Palace are all carried up by porters. (by Xie Guanghui)

5. A dead ancient tree on Tianzhu Peak, hit by lightning (by Shan Xiaogang)

6. Taihe Palace shrouded in mist (by Shan Xiaogang)



erected, with a tiny incense burner on top. "In past times," a monk told me, "many pilgrims attempted to show their piety by climbing onto the dragon head and placing a bundle of burning incense sticks in the burner, and quite a few tumbled to their death in the process." Railings were erected during the Qing Dynasty to forestall such tragedies.

A Test of Endurance

After having lunch in a small restaurant at Nanyan, I set off for Jindian (Golden Hall), knowing that if I could walk at a pace of three kilometres an hour, I could reach my destination 12.5 kilometres away, before nightfall.

A row of rattan-chair litters lay by the footpath leading up the mountain. The porters, strapping young men with towels draped around their necks and cigarettes dangling from the corners of their mouths, were leisurely sitting in the chairs and sun-



bathing. They rose one after another to greet me. "It's back-breaking, isn't it, climbing up the mountain?" one of them said, smiling. "Let us take you there," said another. "We'd love to be your guide," added a third man.

Yet the fresh country air and a longing for physical exercise spurred me on, to pit my physical endurance against the steep slope of the Wudang Mountain. The weather was fine and the temperature mild, ideal for mountain walking. Thus, smiling, I turned down their offer and happily went on my way.



As I plodded along the mountain path hidden in the shade of green trees, thrushes were warbling, and a stream murmured nearby. The path was covered with damp, withered tree branches and leaves. The azaleas by the road had long withered. After trudging over 30 minutes



The longer Qing-dynasty road from Chaotian Palace to Tianzhu Peak has a gentle gradient, while the Ming-dynasty one is steep but considerably shorter.

1

the mountain path emerged from the woods and led to a stone stairway that was slippery and crumbling with age. An hour later, my legs threatened to buckle, my knapsack weighed me down like a lead weight, and even more disheartening, the sky-ladder stairway seemed without end. I cursed myself for having not hired a porter.

By the time I reached the Chaotian (Heaven-Facing) Palace, a 30-year-old woman caught up with me. Li Xiaojuan had grown up in the mountains and ran a photo studio up the mountain with her husband.

She had just returned from sending the previous day's collection of films to the photo processor down the mountain. "You made the return trip in a single day?" I asked in amazement. Smiling, she nodded.

The Temperature Plummets at Sunset

There are two roads from Chaotian Palace to Tianzhu Peak. The Qing-dynasty road on the left is long but smooth; it runs past a hundred-step stairway and across Golden Peak, leading all the way to the Peak of Golden Boy and Jade Girl. The Ming-dynasty road on the right, climbs up a thousand-step stone stairway, threads its way





through the first, second and third heavenly gateways and the Chaosheng Gateway and points directly to the summit; the road was rather steep but shorter. "It's getting late," Li said. "Let's go together; I'll carry some things for you." Though my burden was considerably lighter, I still had trouble catching up with her. My whole body ached, and I was breathing laboriously, but there seemed no end to the stone steps. By the time we reached the Chaosheng Gateway, the sun had already set, and the temperature dropped considerably. "In the mountains night comes earlier," Li said, putting all my luggage on her shoulders. I all but collapsed when I reached the Golden Hall and could not feel the excitement of my accomplishment.

The mountains in the distance had become a blur, and the outlines of the trees faded away. It was in the quiet all around me that a sense of release hit me. I realised that my young companion was still with me and apologised for keeping her. "Doesn't matter," was all she said. She put down my luggage and gathered up her daughter into her arms while asking her husband to take me to the mountain inn.

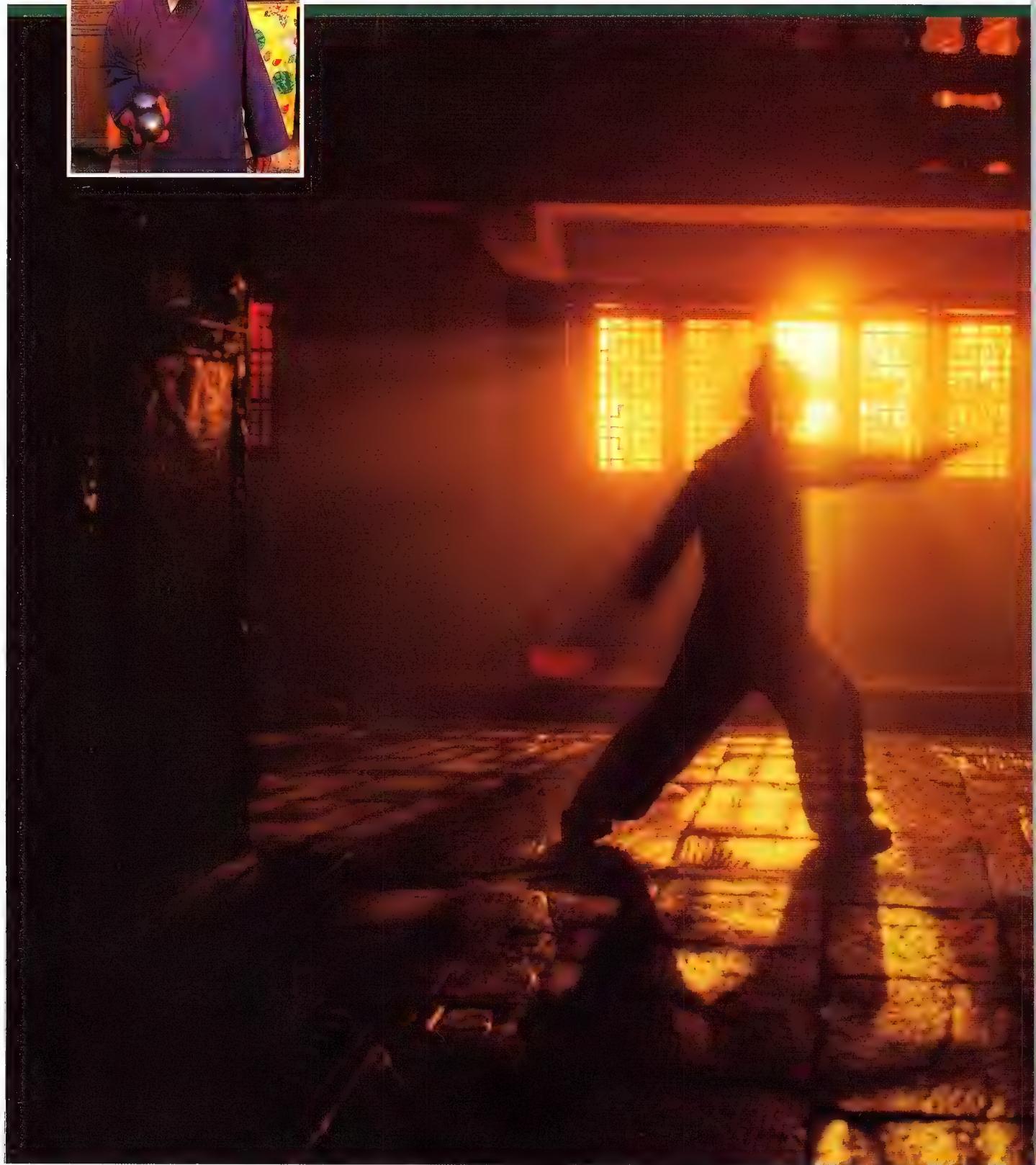
In the dim room light I met my roommate, Zhou Jinbao, a man in his 50s from a village in Xiangfan, Hubei Province. "Last year, my son was seriously bedridden," he told me. "I climbed this mountain to ask the North God for blessings. And this year my son is up and about again." This second visit was to repay the god's kindness. I shed my sweat-drenched clothes, longing for a hot shower, only to see that here it was wishful thinking.



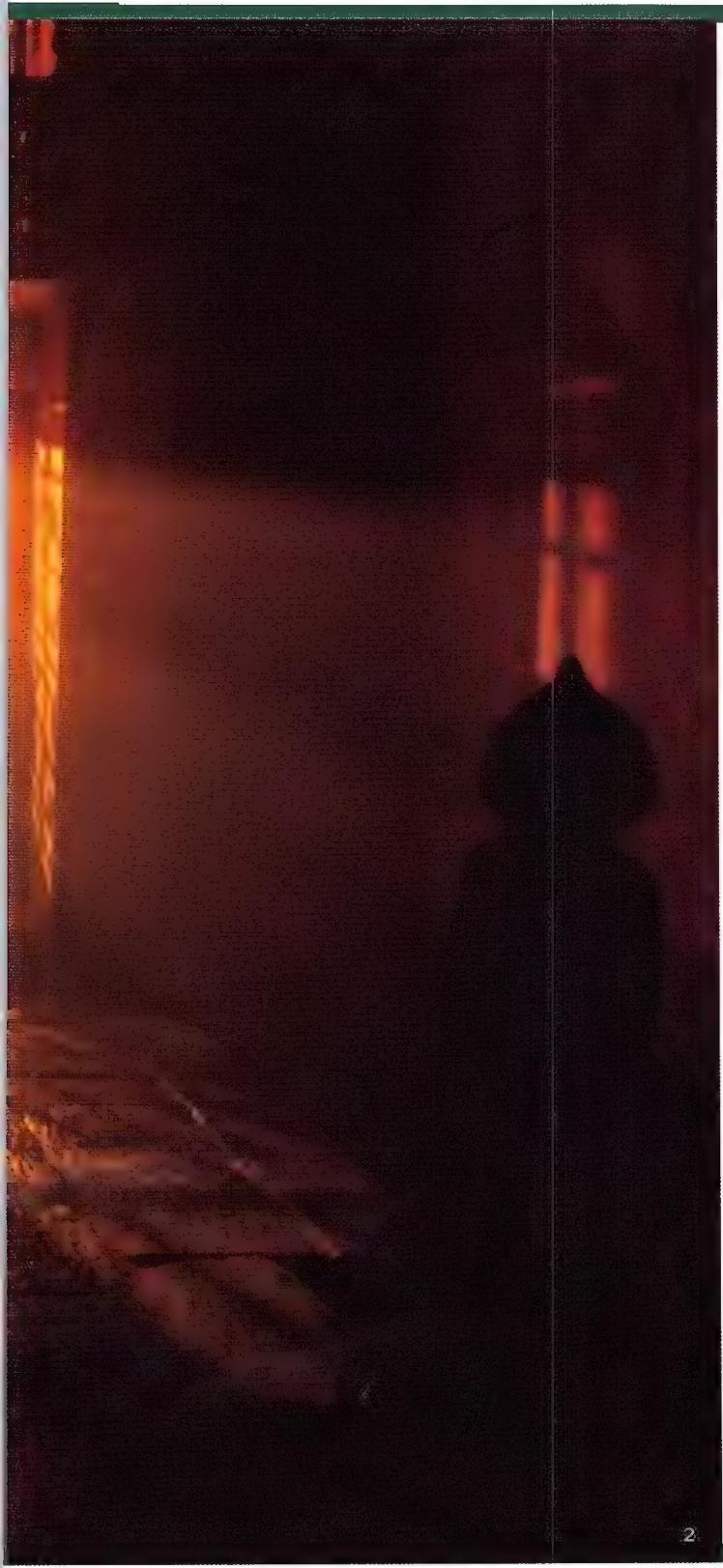
1. "A Snake Riding a Turtle", a precious relic in the Golden Hall (by Yin Daolu)
2. Neijia-style boxing emphasises the use of one's inner power, its movements being a combination of sturdiness and flexibility. (by Yin Daolu)
3. A picture giving instructions for the practice of Taoist martial arts
4. You Xuande, director of the Wudang Martial Arts Institute, teaching Wudang-style sword (by Yin Daolu)
5. Wudang sword is an important part of the Wudang martial arts. (by Xie Guanghui)



1. Taoist martial arts can only be learned under the guidance of Taoist philosophy. (by Xie Guanghui)
2. A Taoist monk practising martial arts in a temple hall (by Yin Daolu)
3. The study of Taoism relies greatly on one's inner power and intuition. (by Xie Guanghui)
4. Pictures portraying Taoist stories are displayed on the walls of a building opposite the Imperial Prayer Hall. (by Shan Xiaogang)



The ranks of Taoist converts at Wudang Mountain are ever increasing even though only people with the true power of intuition have a chance.



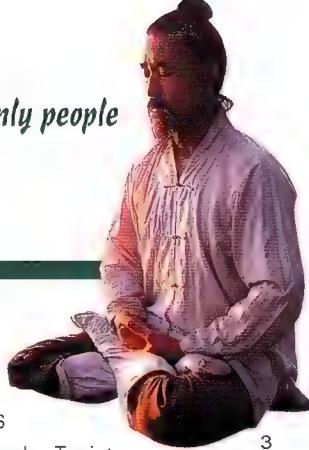
The Ups and Downs of Wudang Mountain

The next morning I was awoken by bells tolling in a nearby Taoist temple summoning the monks to their morning session. Although it was only five o'clock, I forced myself to get up.

The moon still tossed its silvery light upon the mountain. I arrived at the Imperial Prayer Hall where bells dangling from its four roof corners jingled in the wind. The ochre windows and doors were carved in bas-relief with pictures based on Taoist tales. The fragrance from the incense burners was overwhelming. In the dim candlelight I could barely make out the forms of the Divine Trinity, the Jade Emperor and the North God. Taoist priests wearing blue cotton robes sat in a circle in the hall preparing for the morning session.

One of them, Yun Zhongzi, 32, told me that in the Tang and Song dynasties Wudang Mountain was virtually unknown. Only in the early Ming Dynasty, when Zhang Sanfeng settled there as a recluse, did the mountain put its name on the map. When word came that Zhang could live without eating for many days, "fly" over the peaks, and foretell the future, Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang summoned Zhang for an audience. Zhang, however, declined but he predicted Wudang Mountain would become a famous place.

After Zhu's death, his son, Zhu Di, or Emperor Chengzu, moved the capital from Nanjing to Beijing and had the Imperial Palace built there. He issued an edict to erect buildings all over Wudang Mountain. Within 13 years, a group of temple compounds were completed on the mountain, including eight palaces, two temples, 36 prayer halls, 72 mountain temples, and hundreds of bridges, archways, terraces and pavilions. These formed the framework of Wudang Mountain as a Taoist sanctuary. Many of the temple buildings survived the "cultural revolution" of



3



4



The Neijia-style martial arts of Wudang stresses the use of one's inner power. In a mild or even elegant way, it can hold the opponent's violent attack. That is why it is considered by many as mysterious and hard to learn.

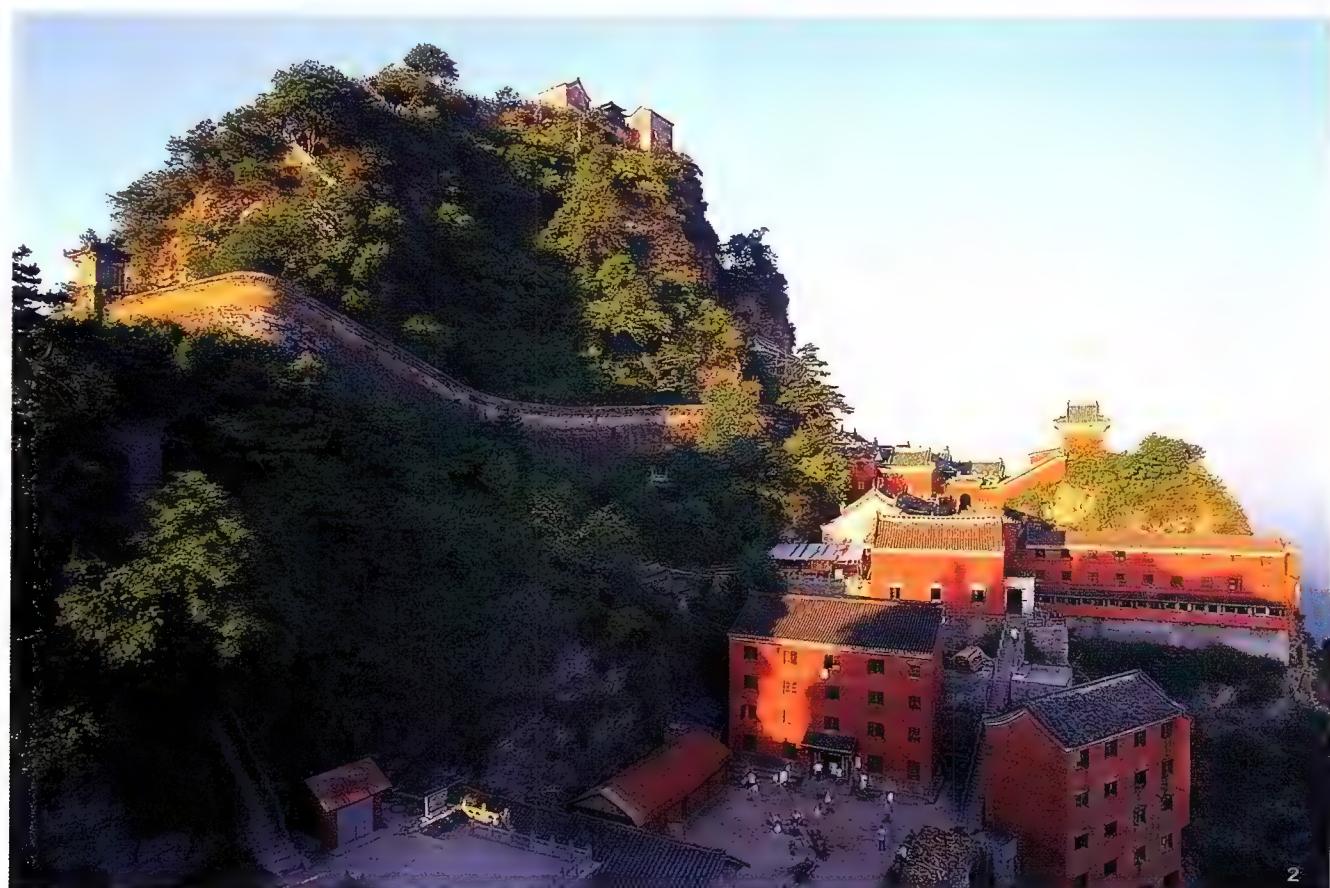
the 1960s, thanks to the army sent by Premier Zhou Enlai to protect them. It was not until 1982, when China passed its newly revised constitution, that Wudang Mountain came into its own as a pilgrim's destination. "The temples up the mountain were short-handed at that time," Yun told me. "As an admirer of Taoism since childhood, I decided to join the monks here." According to Yun, it is not easy to become a true Taoist monk, and only those who with the true power of intuition have the chance.

The Key to Enlightenment

Monks on Wudang Mountain are free to return to the secular world whenever they like. New converts need a few years of rigorous life in the mountains before their minds are purified and they can achieve varying degrees of enlightenment. In northern China the Shaolin Temple is the Mecca for martial arts lovers, while in the south it is Wudang Mountain. The Neijia-style martial art of Wudang emphasises building up inner-body

strength and overcoming the powerful with softness and striking only in response. This style also enables the practitioner to beat an opponent by taking advantage of the latter's exertions; thus, the saying, "With only four ounces of power, one can baffle a thousand-pound attack." Yun Zhongzi believes that the style's theory is based on Lao Zi's philosophy that things tend to break if they are too sturdy, and one survives only by remaining flexible. He sees meditation and drills as essential ways to achieve enlightenment. Fulfilment in the martial arts is not something one demands; it comes naturally, according to one's own intuition, he said. He smiled faintly on hearing of the keen martial arts students who use maximum effort to achieve perfection. "With a relaxed attitude", he said, "you may get twice the results with half the effort."

1. The Golden Hall built on a huge granite rock on top of Tianshu Peak is actually a bronze structure. (by Xie Guanghui)
2. The charming Taihe Palace on the top of Tianshu Peak (by Xie Guanghui)
3. A monk on duty outside the Taihe Palace (by Xie Guanghui)







The strategies and philosophy in Sun Zi's Art of War, which were derived from Taoism, are even used today by modern armies.

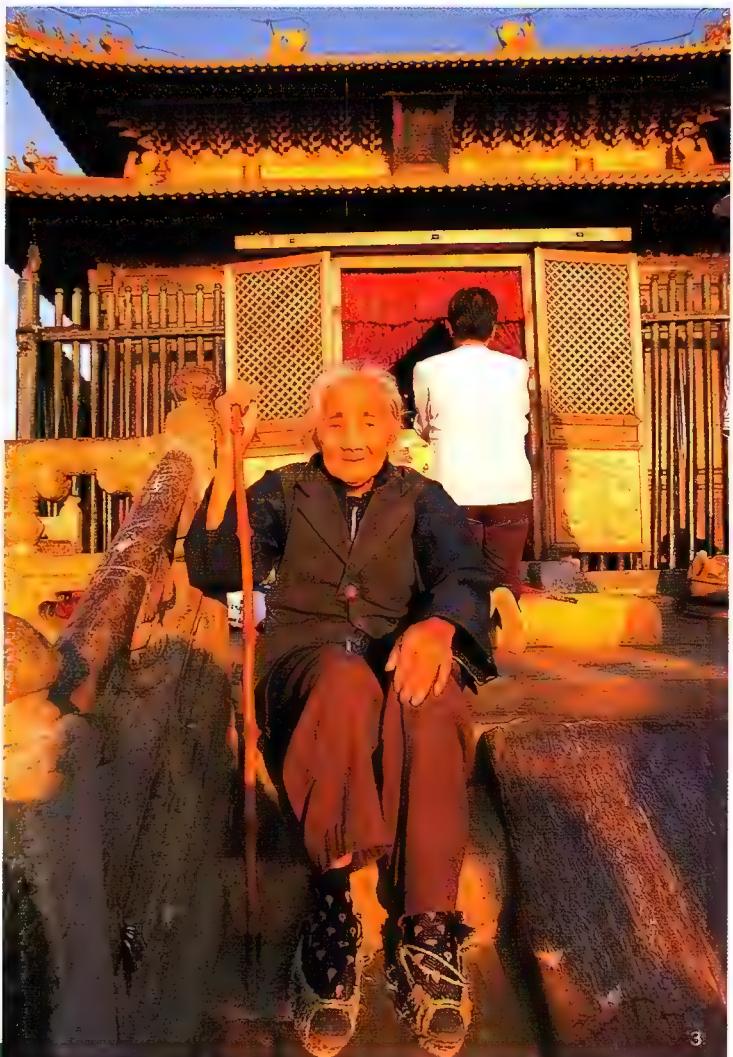
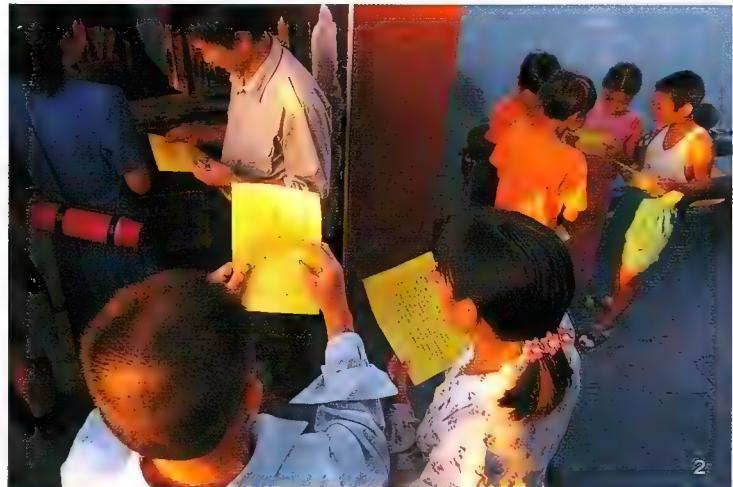
Design for Protection

The Golden Hall, a Ming-dynasty structure under a pyramidal roof cast entirely of gilded bronze, is poised on a huge granite boulder atop Tianzhu Peak 1,612 metres above sea level. Despite its name, the hall contains only one piece of gold embedded in a pillar. Wang, a monk who was sweeping the floor there, pointed at the building's southern corner and said, "Iron railings were added to protect the gold plate."

The throne in the Golden Hall is enshrined with a likeness of the North God. A statue of a virgin boy with books in his hand and a girl holding the seal stands on either side. The god is also accompanied by the flag-holding God of Stars and the sword-wielding God of the North Pole. Everything in the hall is made of bronze, including the table, chairs and incense burners, all of superb workmanship.

The hall's doors were open, and the wind was howling in, but the fire in the lamps and the smoke rising from the incense burners showed no sign of disturbance. "Is there really a so called 'wind-avoiding pearl'?" I asked myself in great bewilderment. "When the ancients built the Golden Hall, they took into consideration the way bronze expands with heat and contracts with cold, and successfully controlled the convection of air," said Yang, the abbot of the hall. In a resonant voice, he continued, "At times when the mountain was covered with a thick pall of clouds threatening rain, a jar-sized fire ball would roll around the mountain slope. If the fire ball touched a stone or a tree, the strike would produce a deafening roar; it was known as 'thunder arising from flat ground'." Taking a sip of tea, he told me an even more astonishing phenomenon. When the area was enveloped in a thunderstorm, a ray of blue light would emit from the base of the hall and quickly burn into green fire spreading upwards to enshroud the entire building. The flame can rise above the rooftop for two or three metres. Strangely, those who stay indoors would be unhurt, but whoever steps out of the hall is bound to be struck by the lightning.

When I asked for an explanation, Yang said, "According to modern science, the ancients adopted the equipotential phenomenon in physics, to protect people in the hall from harm. Furthermore, after the rain, you would see that the green





fire had burned all the dark-green oxides deposited on the surfaces of the hall, and the entire bronze building looks anew. People call this ‘tempering the hall with lightning’. Since the hall was not at all shiny now, I asked if they had a long dry spell. “No,” he answered. “As Wudang Mountain has become a tourist attraction, lightning rods were erected a few years ago. Thus the green fire has disappeared, and the surface of the hall has become heavily oxidised.”

The Spirit of *Tao Te Ching*

As Yang picked up a thread-bound copy of *Tao Te Ching* and began leafing through it, a group of middle-school students looked surprised. The priest sighed at their ignorance and explained, “During the Spring and Autumn Period from 722 to 476 B.C., three great men emerged in this world: Confucius, the Chinese thinker and teacher; Sakyamuni, founder of Buddhism; and Lao Zi, father of Taoism.”

“In this 5,000-word book, each word is a concept in its own right, and each sentence has at least three meanings,” he continued. “By the time of the Tang-dynasty Emperor Xuanzong, it was called *Tao Te Ching*.

As the book *Zhuang Zi* gives the clearest and most thorough interpretation to Lao Zi’s Taoist ideas, it was known as the Nanhua Sutra during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong. Since then its ideas have been widely applied in social affairs, referring to politics, military, education, and economics. It also provides useful guidelines for integrity and self-cultivation.”

The priest mentioned Lord Jiang of the Zhou Dynasty and Fan Li of the Spring and Autumn Period as perfect practitioners of Taoist ideas, since both Lord Jiang and Fan Li had retired from public life and avoided politics and material pursuits.

In the book Sun Zi’s Art of War, Sun Wu derived his military philosophy from Taoism. This book, which helped He Lu, the Duke of Wu, conquer the powerful state of Chu and become one of the most powerful warlords, has transcended time to become universally accepted. Several thousand years later today, according to Priest Yang, when we have been to the moon and invented biological weapons, the American army is still using the book’s tactics, including in the Gulf War.

A Pilgrimage at 93

On the summit of Wudang Mountain a crowd gathered to watch the sunrise. The scenery was magnificent beyond description. The sun turned the clouds from pink to yellow to gray, then penetrated them to establish its position in the sky, tossing its rays all over the world.

I saw the 72 peaks of the Wudang Mountain in the mist, but they had all lost their usual loftiness. As the celebrated Tang-dynast poet Du Fu wrote, “As I ascended the mountain’s crest, all the peaks were dwarfed under my feet.” Musing over the poet’s line, I spotted a silver-haired old lady approaching with a walking stick. She was Ye Liandi, 93, in old-fashioned blue attire and with bound feet. The daughter of a scholar’s family in Xi’an, she was married to Shanxi at 17 and gave birth to nine daughters. Having toiled most of her life and filled her house with generations of offspring she made this special trip to Wudang to pay homage and express her gratitude. I was surprised to learn that she had trudged the entire night up the mountain all the way from the Purple Cloud Palace in Nanyan.

I guessed she would return home after this trip, but I was wrong. She intended to visit the other sacred Taoist mountains — Mount Tai, Hengshan, Huashan and Songshan — to finish her pilgrimage.

Translated by Ling Yuan

1. The maiden statue standing by the North God in the Golden Hall (by Xie Guanghui)
2. Wudang Mountain has irresistible charm. (by Xie Guanghui)
3. The 93-year-old granny has walked overnight to reach the Golden Hall. (by Xie Guanghui)
4. It’s a common goal of travellers to burn a bundle of incense sticks on Tianzhu Peak. (by Xie Guanghui)

TIPS FOR TOURING WUDANG MOUNTAIN



Wudang Mountain is one of China's four major Taoist sanctuaries. In the over 2,000 years since the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, the mountain had been home to many famous Taoists from various dynasties who went there to meditate and achieve immortality. Some even came to make pills of immortality. On December 15, 1994, UNESCO designated the mountain a world cultural heritage. As a national tourist resort Wudang Mountain consists of six scenic zones: Yuxu Palace, Taizi Slope, Nanyan Cliff, Golden Hall, Jade Terrace, and Five-Dragon Palace. Covering 312 square kilometres, the mountain encompasses 72 peaks, 36 cliffs, 24 streams, 11 caves, and numerous springs, pools, exotic rocks and terraces.

Wudang Mountain is situated in Danjiangkou, Hubei Province. With the Shennongjia Tourist Area in the background, it is linked east to Xiangfan, a famous historical city, and west to Shiyan, an auto-making town. The scenery is gorgeous, and transportation is convenient.

Transportation

Long-distance buses

Danjiangkou-Xiangfan: 5:30 a.m.

Danjiangkou-Shiyan: 7:00, 8:00, and 8:40 a.m.

Danjiangkou-Nanyang: 7:40 a.m.

Trains

The Wuhan-Danjiangkou Railway runs for 431 kilometres en route to Laohekou, Xiangfan, Suizhou, and Anlu. Every day there is a passenger train shuttling between Danjiangkou and Wuhan, Hubei's capital.

Tourist Train Nos. 9 and 10 between Shiyan and Wuchang are cosy and air-conditioned express trains for travellers to the mountain. At the Wudangshan Railway Station 41 tickets for seats and six tickets for sleepers are available on a daily basis. Please contact the railway station for reservations. With increased demand, additional passenger cars may be attached to the trains.

Domestic flights to Xiangfan:

The following are flights from major cities to Xiangfan, with departure and arrival times.

City	Flight	Days	Departure	Arrival
Guangzhou	CZ 3357	Wed, Fri, Sun	15:50	17:30
Shanghai	CZ 3849	Wed, Sat	09:45	11:19
Beijing	CA1353	Mon, Thurs	10:45	12:25
Shenzhen	CZ 3983	Tues, Sun	08:50	10:40
Chongqing	SZ4347	Mon, Thurs	08:04	10:10
Xi'an	SZ4248	Mon, Thurs	13:45	15:15

Transport in the Scenic Zone

Buses bound for Nanyan are available at Wudangshan Town. It takes about 30 minutes to cover the distance of 15 kilometres. Ticket price: 10 yuan.

At Nanyan, litters are ready to take you up the 12.5-kilometre-long stairway that leads to the Golden Hall for 80 yuan per person.

The Wudang Mountain Cableway begins at the central temple of Qiongtai (Jade Terrace), and runs 1,510 metres to a point 100 metres below the Golden Hall. Each trip takes 25 minutes. A return trip costs 70 yuan per person.

Accommodation

Danjiangkou Hotel: 21 Renmin Road, Danjiangkou. Double room rate: 150 yuan.

Wudangshan Hotel: Yongle Road, Wudangshan Town. Double room rate: 100 yuan.

Nanyan Hotel: Nanyan Scenic Area. Double room rate: 80 yuan.

Taoist Association Guesthouse, Taihegong Scenic Area. Double room rate: 80 yuan.

Souvenirs

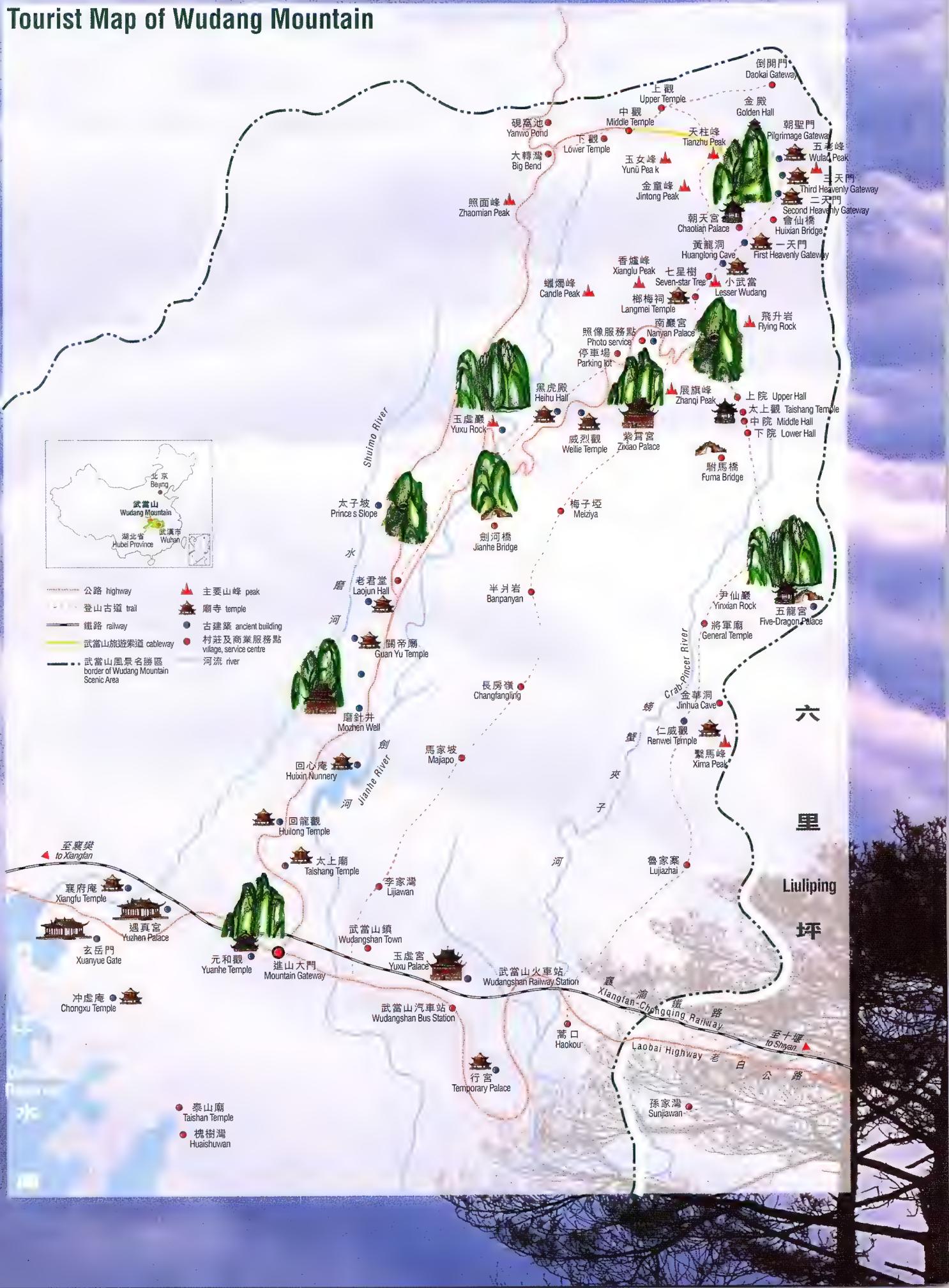
Wudang Swords: These are the first choice of souvenir hunters. The Wudang swords are made of quality iron alloy, with dragon and phoenix patterns inscribed on both sides. The sheath is fashioned out of wood and imbedded with copperwork patterns and the three Chinese characters meaning, "Wudang Sword". The hand shield is graced with copperwork as well, and the handles are made of quality Chinese ilex wood.

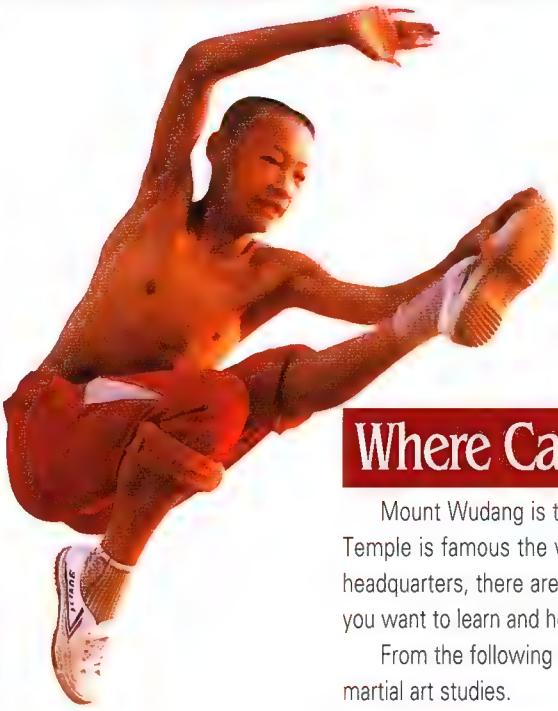
Longevity Walking Sticks: Produced in Saiwudang, which is opposite the Golden Peak of the Wudang Mountain, this walking stick is made of a kind of rattan that is resilient and the perfect thickness. The top of the sticks are in a variety of natural images such as a golden knob, the God of Longevity, and the head of a dragon, phoenix, monkey or bird. They are excellent tools for climbing the mountains and make good gifts for elderly people.



1. Nanyan Palace (by Yin Daolu)
2. A store selling Chinese medicinal herbs at the Zixiao Palace (by Xie Guanghui)
3. It takes only 25 minutes to travel up Wudang Mountain by the 1,510 - metre - long cableway, which ascends from the Middle Temple to a terminal 100 metres below the Golden Hall.
4. Local products of Wudang Mountain (by Shan Xiaogang)
5. The stairs outside the Taihe Palace (by Xie Guanghui)

Tourist Map of Wudang Mountain





Learning Martial Arts in China

Where Can You Learn Chinese Kungfu?

Mount Wudang is the home of Taoist martial arts, while Mount Songshan's Shaolin Temple is famous the world over for its Buddhist martial arts. In addition to these two headquarters, there are many other places to learn Kungfu in China. It depends on what you want to learn and how much time you want to spend on it.

From the following schools and centres, you may want to choose one for your future martial art studies.



Most families in Chenjiagou Village of Henan have the tradition of practising martial arts.

Anyang Refined Martial Arts Centre

Mainly for training film and TV martial arts actors and actresses. Master Xu Guocai is the director and chief instructor. **Courses and Tuition:** Elementary course: 20 days at 230 yuan; Intermediate course: 40 days at 240 yuan; Advanced course: 60 days at 260 yuan. Intensive course: 60 days at 440 yuan. Other courses include: Free-fighting course, set-technique course, and cultural and martial arts course for three months to two years with tuition fees from 500 to 2,000 yuan. There is another course, Qigong for Health, with no fixed terms until mastered and the tuition fee is 400 yuan. Accommodation is free for all courses. Address: West Section, Wenming Dadao, Tiexi District, Anyang, Henan Province. Tel: (372) 392 5046

Shaolin Temple Guards' Hard Qigong and Martial Arts Institute, Anyang

Its director is Head Master De Zhuo. Its instructors are the master's fellow apprentices and disciples. **Subjects:** Free fighting, wrestling and combat, hard Qigong, free-fighting technique for women bodyguards and secretaries, and Lee's boxing. **Tuition fee:** 1,100 yuan for three-four months; 2,000-3,000 yuan for one year. Free accommodation; 2 yuan for each meal; 250 yuan for miscellaneous fee. **Address:** Shaolin Temple Guards' Hard Qigong Martial Arts Institute, Angang Dadao, Anyang, Henan Province. Tel: (372) 393 3502

Huanming Chinese Martial Arts Centre, Beijing

Subjects and tuition fee: Boxing, fighting and Chan Buddhist martial arts; 580 yuan for 40 days. Accommodation and food: 300 yuan per month (six people sharing a room).

Address: Yuanmingyuan Road West, Haidian District, Beijing. Tel: (10)6833 2128, 6289 5108

Other martial arts centres and schools:

Chen-family Taiji Martial Arts Centre, Wenxian, Henan Province; Wudang Martial Arts Centre, Shiyan, Hubei Province; Shaolin Martial Arts Centre on Mount Songshan, Henan Province (detailed introduction in Issue No. 195); **Songjiang Martial Arts School, Yuncheng, Shandong Province; Quanzhou Sword-shadow Martial Arts Centre, Licheng District of Quanzhou, Fujian Province; Mengcun Martial Arts School, Cangzhou, Hebei Province.**

(We do not have detailed information for the above centres and schools. Those who are interested in could contact them directly.)



Shaolin disciples from Europe on Mount Songshan

The Wonderful Shaolin Boy — Shi Xiaolong

Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

Shi Xiaolong, nine years old, was originally named Chen Xiaolong. Xiaolong's father, Chen Tongshan, is the principal of Songshan Shaolin Martial Arts School next door to Shaolin Temple, and has won the title of the Perfect Boxer of Songshan Shaolin Temple, and the gold medal of the National Martial Arts Competition.



Xiaolong and Jacky Chan
(by Chen Tongshan)

Like father, like son, Xiaolong has a gift for martial arts. When he was still a toddler, he liked watching the Shaolin monks practising kungfu, and imitated them at home. His parents believed Xiaolong was a martial arts genius, and sent him to Shaolin Temple when he was only two. His teacher is Master Shi Yongxin, a 29th-generation monk at Shaolin. Given the Buddhist

name Shi Xiaolong, he has become the youngest Shaolin disciple.

In six months, Xiaolong had grasped the basic techniques of Shaolin martial arts. At the age of three, he had learned as many as 20 types of Shaolin kungfu. In 1992 and 1993, he was invited to take part in the Zhengzhou International Shaolin Martial Arts Competition, and was awarded the prize for excellence and the special trophy respectively. Though just a kid, Xiaolong is a serious kungfu learner. In June 1993, Xiaolong, with the Shaolin Temple delegation to Taiwan, was spotted by movie makers. Now he has already starred in several films. He was invited as a special guest to present an award to Jacky Chan, the celebrated kungfu star, in the Hong Kong Films Award in 1995.



Xiaolong has taken part in many movies.

Translated by Jess Tang

Shi Xingpeng — Master of Shaolin Boy Martial Skill

Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

Shi Yongpan, famous for his performance of Shaolin Boy Martial Skill on the International Martial Arts Festival, has now changed his name to Shi Xingpeng. He is the first-grade instructor of the Martial Monk Troupe in the Shaolin Martial Arts Centre.

When he entered Shaolin Temple, he first learned the Shaolin Boy Martial Skill. Through hardwork and the combination of Buddhist cultivation with martial arts in the past dozen years, he has become the master of this skill, outstanding among the martial monks in the temple.

I entered his room only to find it so simply furnished. The only modern object was a CD player given by one of his friends. A Buddhist image was enshrined by the main wall, and a big poster was hung on the eastern wall. Weapons of all kinds like swords and rods were put at one corner. On the table were piled with medals, silk banners, souvenirs of different nationalities and his pictures while practising. The poster was from Austria where he was invited to give performance in Vienna.

Because of his outstanding performance of the Shaolin Boy Martial Skill, he is always the most welcome and often specially invited. In the 1990s, he had been to Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and more than 20 countries, including Japan, Germany, France and the United States.

His used passports filled up a drawer. Letters of invitation keep coming one after another, and he has to share these invitations with his friends in the troupe. He drew out a suitcase from under his bed, which were full of newspapers and magazines reporting on his visits and performances overseas.

One of his items, "Sucking Bowls by Interior Energy", is the most popular. When he was in Canada, a film actor, a stunt man, tried to pull off the bowl sucking to his belly but failed. With supporting shouts from the audience, he tried again, but could not make it even with his hands bleeding. He recognised his defeat and made friends with Shi Xingpeng. When Shi and others were visiting Frankfurt, the local newspaper called them "Supermen".

Often Shi is the first to perform, and his "Shaolin Iron Head Skill" is always very much liked by the audience. This performance needs strong basic skills, and both skilled people or laymen can see how good he is.



Xingpeng in his room

The Whole Family Learns Shaolin Martial Arts

Photos & article by Ye Fuhua, Xu Yunxing and Mai Jieci



The "Big Family" who went to Shaolin to learn martial arts

None of us had never practised martial arts before; all we knew was that Mount Songshan is one of the places where Chinese martial arts originated. We registered at the Tagou Martial Arts School on Mount Songshan in Henan Province through the Henan Tourism Administration. The school offers complete courses with terms from one week to one year. With only a short summer holiday and a desire to visit the ancient capitals Luoyang and Xi'an too, we signed on for a one-week course.

16 Members of Three Generations

Our family group consisted of 16 members, from 80-year-old grandparents to a 10-year-old granddaughter. We flew from Hong Kong to Zhengzhou, capital of Central China's Henan Province, and stayed overnight in the city. The next day we visited the Mangshan Tourist Area by the Yellow River, enjoying the landscape tremendously and appreciating the magnificence of the Yellow River, which is so strongly linked with the Chinese culture and history. In the afternoon, we took a bus to Dengfeng, which has clean and neat streets with many new houses. Passing Mount Taishi, Mount Shaoshi and the Shaolin Reservoir, we entered the Shaolin Temple Area and finally arrived at the drilling ground of the Tagou Martial Arts School. We suddenly became quiet on seeing more than 2,000 students

standing in neat formation and listening to the instructor's speech. Immediately we felt the solemn atmosphere of the school.

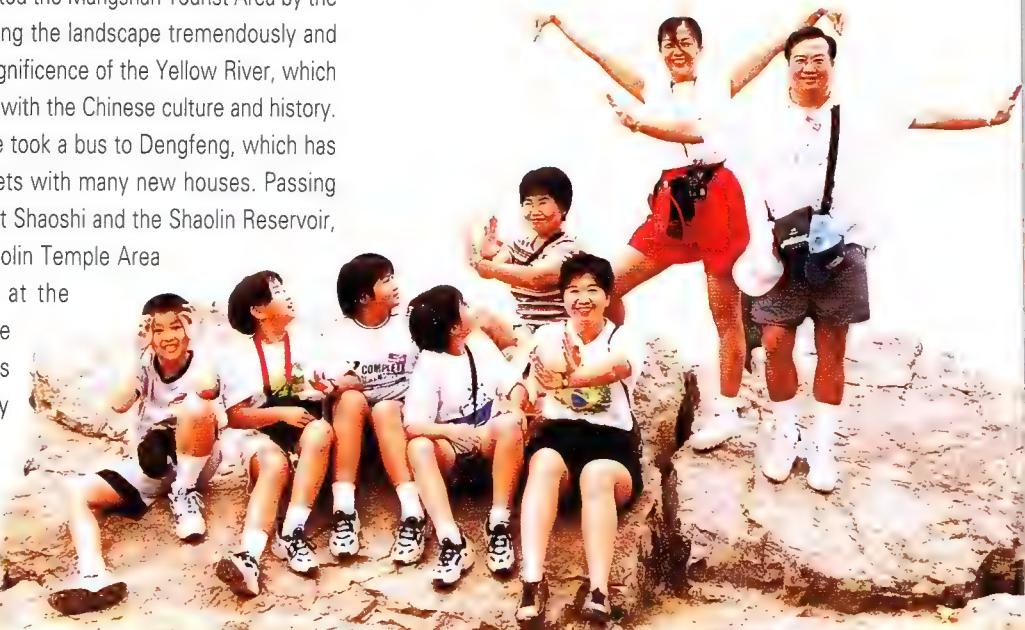
We lodged in a tourist hotel outside the school. The hotel is neat and clean but the bath facilities are a little primitive. The rooms are air-conditioned with hot water and TV sets with programs from many stations in China.

Starting with the Basics

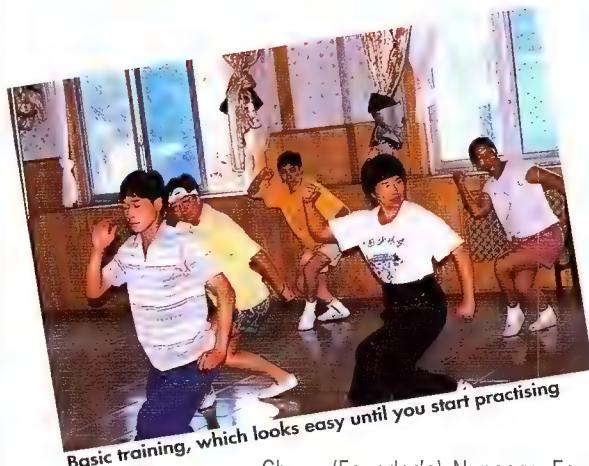
At 5 a.m. every morning, bugles blare throughout the valley. Monks and students rise to do morning exercises. As we were not regular students, we did not need to join them. Three instructors were assigned to us: one taught the men, one taught the women and another taught the six children. They looked young, none could be older than 20, but had had 10 years experience in practising martial arts. We first did a warm-up and some basic exercises; it was then that the instructors knew that we had never had any basic training in martial arts. Since we also wanted to tour around in the afternoons, our instructors suggested we learn the much easier "18-Arhat boxing" skills rather than our original plan to learn the "Xiaohong boxing" skills. On the following days, we first practised basic skills for about an hour and then started our martial arts movements for another hour, finishing around 11 a.m. Thus we had plenty of time to visit the surrounding area.

Rich Cultural Relics Around Shaolin Temple

We visited many interesting places, including the Shaolin Temple, a very old cypress called "Great General",



On Mount Shaoshi



Basic training, which looks easy until you start practising

Chuzu (Founder's) Nunnery, Erzu (Second Founder's) Nunnery, Dharma Cave and Five-Dragon Pool.

Going up to the Dharma Cave, where the famous Indian monk Bodhidharma meditated for nine years, was a very hard and challenging trip. We climbed up the southern side of Wuru (Five-Breast) Mountain for over four hours on countless steps. When we were visiting the cave, a big storm started. It was a rare chance to enjoy the view after a rainfall, with mist floating through blue sky. Before we descended, luck was with us again and a young monk of the Dharma Cave offered to take us to see the Chuzu Nunnery which was not usually open to the public. It was nestled amongst ancient trees on a hilltop surrounded by steep cliffs. Many of the objects there have been listed as cultural relics under state protection, including the finely-carved pillars and the old trees in the nunnery.

Our trip to the Five Dragon Pool took us more than two hours return through arduous mountain paths. On our way, we met monks from the Shaolin Temple practising martial arts in the valley. They appeared more realistic and powerful than in any performance we had ever seen. Their tremendous skills in climbing cliffs with bare hands and feet surprised us the most.

Reaching Our Goals

The martial arts students have to take literacy classes as well. There is a flag-raising ceremony every Tuesday morning which we attended too. The students filled the drilling ground and sang the school song. We did not know the words, but were deeply moved by its tune. Later our instructor taught us the song:

"The morning bell rings and the drum is beaten. Our fists and legs have tons of strength and our shouts roar like thunder. Building our strength and upholding truth, we do not care about the differences of schools, but unite to contribute to our country. We come to learn Shaolin martial arts, Tagou school trains us as 'iron' troops. Shaolin youths show their spirit, and invincibly traverse the world. Shaolin youths show their spirit, and win gold medals with

renowned names. Like dragons dancing over the Yellow River, like tigers jumping on Mount Songshan, we stamp new footprints and practise the latest skills. Training fists and legs and learning strategies, we carry out the traditions from our fathers and keep the Shaolin arts alive forever...."

Our instructors knew that our physical condition was poor, so they did not expect too much. So long as we worked hard, made the correct movements and punched our fists in the right direction, we all passed. A glance at the students at regular courses showed how fortunate we were. With very strict instructors, they had to repeat things again and again until perfect.

In the evening, we saw groups of students playing swords or rods in the dark as if they were trying to fight their way out of Shaolin Temple.

The food we had there was quite good; we had eight dishes and two soups plus rice and noodles, and watermelon for dessert at every meal. Though not much meat and fish were served, the fresh vegetables were tasty.

Practising Martial Arts After Returning

On the last two days, Mr. Liu, the Deputy Director, personally taught the grandparents some boxing movements for health and instructed us all about *qi* (internal energy) and *yi* (self-cultivation). At first we feared the test; what a shame if we failed! But the judges were easy on us. Besides us, there were many other overseas students from all over the world, including Taiwan, Korea, Britain, Germany and Holland. Some just stayed for a short period, and others came for a year!

A week quickly elapsed, and we reluctantly went on our way back home. Though far from being martial arts masters, we have been practising every day. Even when very tired, we would spare a few minutes to practise the "18-Arhat boxing" skills and, surprisingly, they always help revive our energy.

Translated by M.Q.



The students having their breakfast squatting at the grounds

FAMOUS TAOIST LANDS OF THE IMMORTALS



A Taoist nun on Weibao Mountain by Xu Jinyan

Among the many religions practised in China, the Taoist religion is a wholly indigenous one; the others, such as Buddhism, are imported.

Like the Four Famous Buddhist Mountains, there are also Four Famous Taoist Mountains in China. Followers of the Taoist religion believe that beyond the world where the ordinary people live, there are 36 caves and 72 lands of blessing, which are the abodes of the immortals. These places where the immortals live are believed to be serene spots of unusually beautiful natural scenery. As a result, many pieces of ennobling scenery in the mundane world declined to "lands of the immortals". These places are scattered across the length and breadth of China. The following are some of them where readers may wish to spend a holiday and experience the beauty of the

Distribution of Famous Taoist Mountains, Caverns and Lands



Kongtong Mountain (by Zhang Runguo)



Tower-View Terrace — The First Land of Blessing

The Tower-View Terrace at the northern foot of the Zhongnan Mountain is 15 kilometres southeast of Zhouzi and about 70 kilometres from Xi'an in Shaanxi Province. It is said that at the time of the Western Zhou Dynasty (c.11th century-770 B.C.), Yin Xi, Guardian of Han'gu Pass, built a tower to observe the heavenly bodies. Later, when Lao Zi (Li Er), founder of the Taoist philosophy, travelled through Han'gu Pass, Yin Xi built an elevated platform south of the tower for Lao Zi to lecture on his *Canon of the Virtue of the Tao*. The place then became known as the Tower-View Terrace and the birthplace of the Chinese Taoist religion.

The Tower-View Terrace is located among hills with a compound hidden in a dense forest on the Scripture-Lecturing Terrace.

Transport: A direct bus goes to the Tower-View Terrace from Yuxiang Gate in Xi'an. It takes over an hour.



Wangwu Mountain (by Shi Baoxiu)

Wangwu Mountain — The First Immortals' Cavern

Wangwu Mountain in Henan Province, about 30 kilometres northwest of the city of Jiyuan, is a solitary peak rising over 1,700 metres above sea level at the southern tip of the Taihang Mountains. It was the home of the legendary Foolish Old Man who removed mountains. During the Tang Dynasty (618-907), Emperor Xuanzong patronised Taoism and summoned the Taoist monk Sima Chengzhen from the south to Wangwu Mountain to lecture on Taoism and make pills of immortality. From then on, Wangwu Mountain gradually became a famous Taoist land and later "The First Immortals' Cavern".

Besides Wangwu Mountain's Heavenly Altar there are five other attractions. Wangwu itself is a majestic and elegant mountain.

Transport: Jiyuan is very close to Luoyang and can be reached by train or bus. There is a special mini-bus line linking Jiyuan with the Wangwu Mountain.



Stone carvings on Mount Laoshan (by Catherine Lee)

Mount Laoshan — a Sacred Taoist Mountain by the Sea

Mount Laoshan standing by the Yellow Sea to the northeast of Qingdao in Shandong Province is famous as The Second Centre of the All-True Sect of Taoism. Leaders of the All-True Sect like Qiu Chuji of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) and Zhang Sanfeng, a legendary martial arts hero of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) came here to spread their beliefs.

The main peak of Mount Laoshan rises 1,133 metres above sea level. As the entire mountain is beautifully and rhythmically shaped, the ancients had found 12 scenic attractions on it. Mount Laoshan's mineral water is also famous. The Tsingtao Beer made with it is even more famous.

Transport: There are frequent shuttle buses between Qingdao and Mount Laoshan.

Qingcheng Mountain — One of the 10 Caverns of Blessing

Qingcheng (Green City) Mountain, 15 kilometres southwest of Duijiangyan in Sichuan Province, derived such a name because its green peaks look like circular city walls. In this quiet area deep in the mountains, Heavenly Teacher Zhang (Daoling) had propagated the Taoist truth; thus it has been named one of the 10 Taoist Caverns of Blessing.

Transport: Many shuttle buses run daily between Chengdu and Duijiangyan. From there mini-buses run to Green City Mountain.



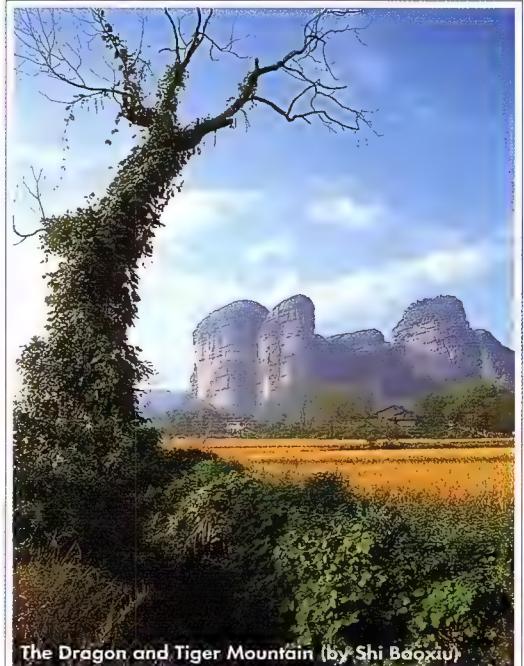
Four Famous Taoist Mountains

1. The Crane-Crying Mountain

Heming (Crane-Crying) Mountain near the county seat of Jian'ge in Sichuan Province is the "ancestral mountain" where Heavenly Teacher Zhang Daoling founded the Taoist religion. There are still several dozen

Taoist statues on the mountain. One of them, a Celestial Worthy wearing an ample robe and a pair of Taoist boots, is a representative work of Taoist sculpture.

Transport: Jian'ge is linked with Chengdu by a direct long-distance bus. The majestic Jianmen Pass is also located within the boundary of Jian'ge County.



The Dragon and Tiger Mountain (by Shi Baoxiu)

2. Dragon and Tiger Mountain

Longhu (Dragon and Tiger) Mountain in Guixi County, Yingtan, Jiangxi Province, is so named for the shape of its two peaks. The first-generation Taoist Heavenly Teacher was said to have prepared elixirs of life here. Later, Zhang Sheng, the fourth-generation disciple of Zhang Daoling, moved his base from the Crane-Crying Mountain to this mountain. By 1949, the succession of Heavenly Teachers had reached the 63rd generation in more than 1,900 years. The mountain is also the 32nd Taoist Land of Blessing. To the southeast of the town of Shangqing (Upper Purity) is the site of the Temple of Upper Purity, the largest and oldest Taoist temple in China. The red sandstone mountains of unusual and elegant shapes here present picturesque scenery.

Transport: A special mini-bus goes to the Dragon and Tiger Mountain Villa or Upper Purity from Yingtan, which can be reached from Nanchang by train or bus.

3. Qiyun Mountain

Known for its deep and secluded valleys and spectacular peaks, Qiyun (Cloud-Reaching) Mountain in Xuining County, Anhui Province, is only 30-plus kilometres from Mount Huangshan. For its 36 strange peaks and 72 weirdly shaped rocks, the mountain is one of the "Three Beauties of Southern Anhui" together with Mount Huangshan and Mount Juhua. The mountain has been a Taoist centre since the Tang Dynasty.

Transport: There is a bus from Mount Huangshan to Xuining, where a special mini-bus runs to the foot of the mountain.

4. Wudang Mountain (See article in this issue)



Kunyu Mountain — Birthplace of the All-True Sect

Kunyu Mountain, 923 metres above sea level, extends across the two counties of Wendeng and Maoping in Shandong Province. It was the mountain where Wang Chongyang, founder of the All-True Sect of Taoism, founded the new sect and recruited seven disciples, including Qiu Chuji, Ma Jue, Wang Chuyi and Sun Bu'er. Together they advocated "the integration of the three beliefs (Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism)" and "the equality of the three beliefs". Taoist temples were built on the mountain and flourished for a time. Only the Ancient Cave of Misty Afterglow now remains.

Transport: Both Yantai and Weihai are connected by bus with Maoping, from where a special bus goes from Maoping to the Longtang Hot Springs at the foot of the mountain.

Suxianling — The Longevity Hill of Blessing

Suxianling on the outskirts of Chenzhou in Hunan Province is "the 18th Land of Blessing" or "The Longevity Hill of Blessing". Trees grow in luxuriance on the hill, where many scenic spots are found, such as the Peach Blossom Mansion, Three Unique Stone Tablets, Jingxing Temple, Suxian Temple and White Deer Cave. General Zhang Xueliang, who started the Xi'an Incident in 1936, was for a time imprisoned in two small side rooms in the Suxian Temple.

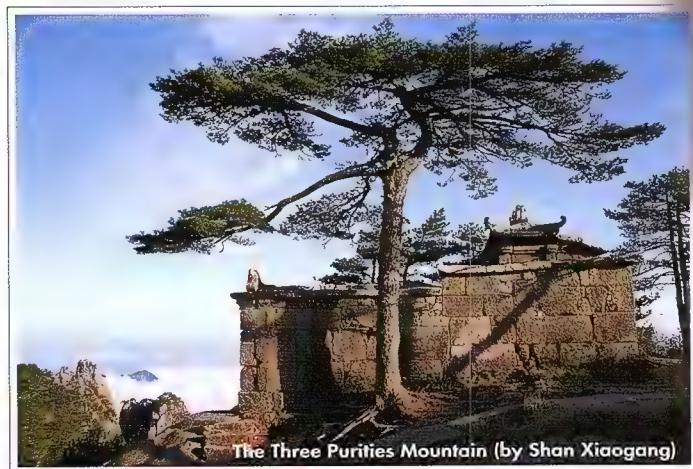
Transport: There is a regular train service from Shenzhen or Guangzhou to Chenzhou. As Suxianling is very close to the city district of Chenzhou, it can be reached by a mini-bus or taxi.

Xiandu Hill — a Famous Spot in Eastern Zhejiang

This is the 29th Taoist Cavern of Blessing. Xiandu (Immortals Gathering) Hill, originally called Jinyun Hill, derived its new name because Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty, who believed in Taoism, described the hill as "a place where the immortals gather". He also wrote the two characters, *Xian Du*, in his own hand.

About eight kilometres from the county town of Jinyun in Zhejiang Province, the hill is located in a famous scenic area where there are hills and rocks in a variety of strange shapes, as if skilfully sculptured.

Transport: Jinyun can be reached by train from both Wenzhou and Hangzhou. A mini-bus goes from Jinyun to the scenic area.



There are many more famous Taoist mountains in China, such as Mount Huangshan in Anhui, the Three Purities Mountain in Jiangxi Province, the Kongtong Mountain in Gansu Province, the Weibao Mountain in Yunnan, the Maoshan Mountain in Jiangsu, and the Tiangu Mountain in Hebei Province. As they have been written about in this magazine before, they are not described here.



Thousand-Layer Cakes of Northwest China's Farmers

Photos & article by Chen Huai

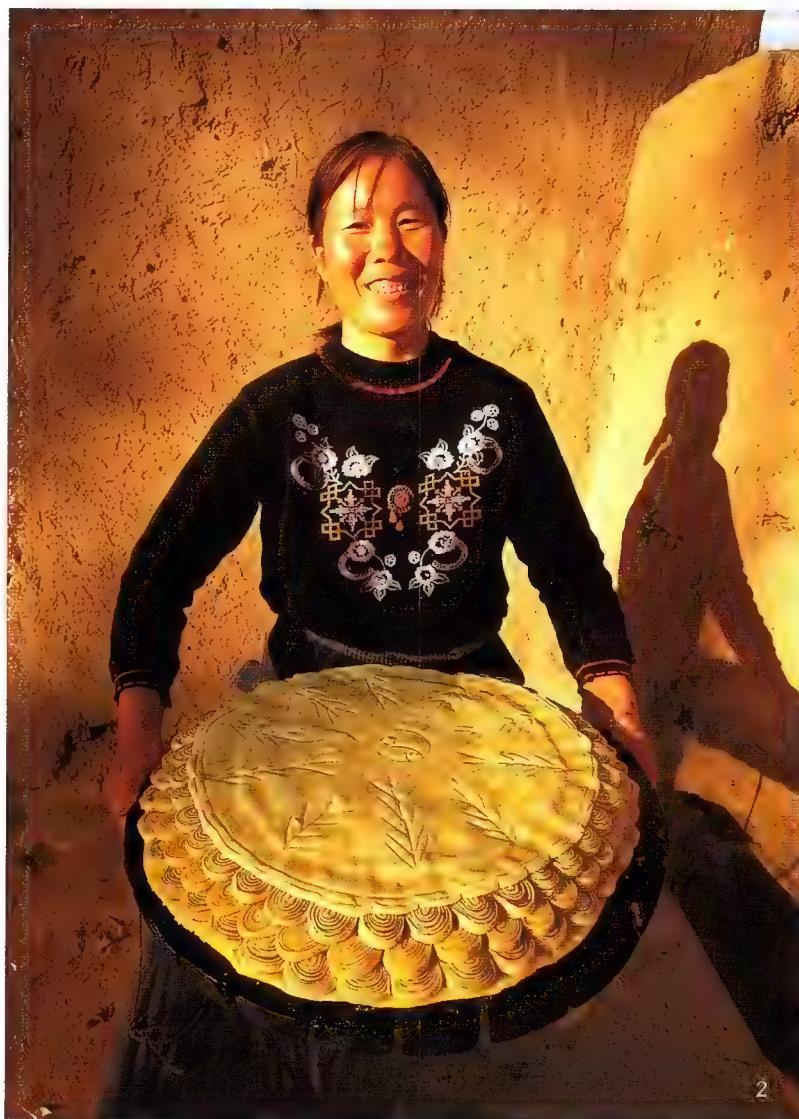
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It is the tradition of the Han Chinese to eat moon cakes during the Mid-Autumn Festival, which falls on the 15th day of the eighth month on the lunar calendar. Delicate moon cakes made in big cities become tastier with each passing year, and commercial advertising starts in June or July every year. Meanwhile, the farmers in the vast countryside of Northwest China are still busy with their crops; only after the harvest can they earn back the money for their year-long hard work.

The busy farming season usually lasts up to the beginning of the eighth lunar month. When the farm work is finally done, the men gather daily at the village's open space, where they smoke cheap cigarettes while idly chatting about everything under the sun. The women traditionally start making moon cakes around the 12th or 13th day of the eighth lunar month by kneading and fermenting wheat-flour dough that will become the big, coloured, steamed bread — moon cakes. Every household prepares many cakes, which, in the cool and dry weather, can keep for 10 to 15 days.

The method of making the cakes is similar to that of steamed bread: Roll out the fermented dough and place one layer upon another, after adding various locally favoured spices and cooking oil on each layer. One big coloured cake has at least several dozen layers, hence its popular name, "Thousand-layer Cake". Today, when the farmers are better off, they add in fancy ingredients such as raisins, peanuts, walnuts, apricot kernels

and red dates, to make the cakes more delicious. On the eve of the Mid-autumn Festival, the cakes, cut into pieces, are piled up on a plate on a table in the courtyard and, traditionally, surrounded with fruits grown by the farmers themselves, such as apples, pears, dates and pomegranates. This is the "Sacrificial Offer to the Moon". Only after the moon rises high in the sky and the Goddess of the Moon has enjoyed the food do the people share the cakes and fruits among themselves. 



1. After the "Sacrificial Offer to the Moon", the family members eat the cakes.
2. A huge moon cake ready to be steamed



1

Rollers with Diced Mutton

— Famous Food in the Hexi Corridor

Photos & article by Chen Huai



2

During the “cultural revolution” (1966-76) as one of the so-called “educated youths”, I was sent to settle down in Shandan County in the Hexi Corridor of Gansu Province. Life was pretty hard at that time. The day we got to the countryside happened to be the Dragon Boat Festival (the fifth day of the fifth lunar month). Since it was not a rice-producing region, the local peasants had none of the typical glutinous-rice dumplings or glutinous-rice cakes that southern folks normally have. The local people, however, managed to get a little rice from the county town. Not knowing whether the rice was glutinous or not, they steamed some cakes with it and then fried some thin cakes of wheat flour. We ate them, putting the precious rice cake between two wheat cakes — just like a sandwich. Their kindness left a deep impression on me.

The day after the 20 of us educated youths arrived, a welcoming meeting was held in the village’s primary school, and we were treated to an impressive dish called “Rollers with Diced Mutton”. I remember clearly that a sheep was slaughtered on the spot and a large cauldron of the dish was made for us. This was the

best meal I had during my three years in the countryside, and it was an unforgettable experience.

Twenty years later, when I passed by Shandan, all sorts of feelings welled up in my mind. In one restaurant I found the familiar food, “Rollers with Diced Mutton”, on the menu and ordered a large bowl of it, even though I knew I could not finish it. After I ordered, I went especially to the kitchen to watch how the dish was made.

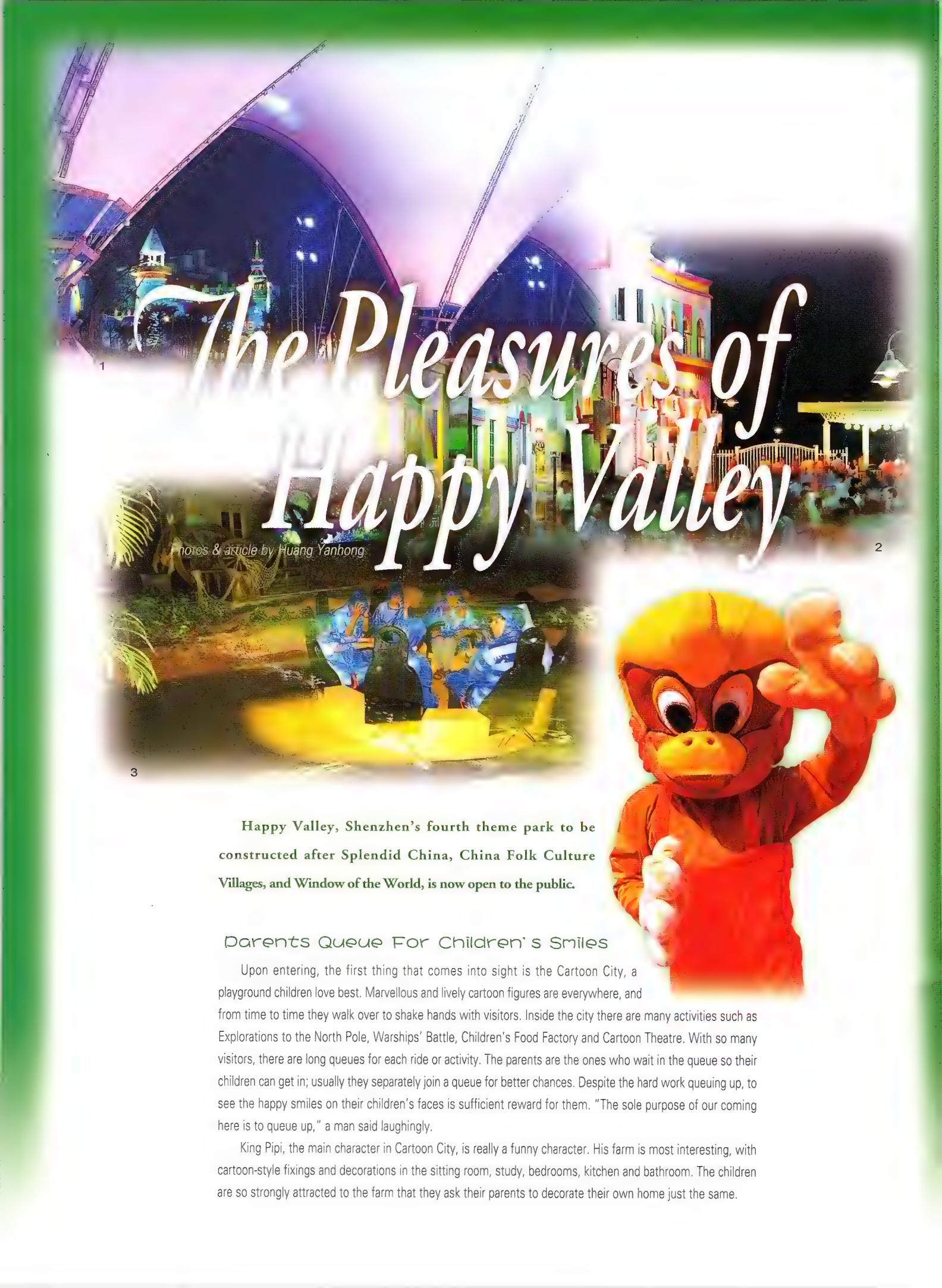
First, the cook rolled out the kneaded wheat dough, which was a bit thicker than that for noodles; then he put some cooking oil and shreds of green Chinese onion on the sheet, rolled it and cut it into sections about one inch long to get “rollers”. Next he diced fresh mutton and light-fried it in a pot with condiments such as Chinese prickly ash, ginger and pepper. Stewing the meat till medium-done, he then piled the rollers on top, added some soup base and continued the stew over a slow fire till the mutton was completely cooked.

Nowadays, to save time and energy, restaurants usually use a pressure cooker, but the flavour of such a dish is far from what I had years ago when it was cooked in the traditional way. When done the old way, the fragrance of the mutton is absorbed into the rollers and the whole dish is tasty, neither too strong nor too greasy.

This simple and delicious dish, “Rollers with Diced Mutton”, is now listed as a representative food of the area and is available on the restaurants’ menu in the areas of Shandan and Yongchang in the Hexi Corridor.

©

1. "Rollers with Diced Mutton", a local dish in the Hexi Corridor
2. Making the rollers with wheat dough



The Pleasures of Happy Valley

Notes & article by Huang Yanhong

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2

Happy Valley, Shenzhen's fourth theme park to be constructed after Splendid China, China Folk Culture Villages, and Window of the World, is now open to the public.

Parents Queue For Children's Smiles

Upon entering, the first thing that comes into sight is the Cartoon City, a playground children love best. Marvellous and lively cartoon figures are everywhere, and from time to time they walk over to shake hands with visitors. Inside the city there are many activities such as Explorations to the North Pole, Warships' Battle, Children's Food Factory and Cartoon Theatre. With so many visitors, there are long queues for each ride or activity. The parents are the ones who wait in the queue so their children can get in; usually they separately join a queue for better chances. Despite the hard work queuing up, to see the happy smiles on their children's faces is sufficient reward for them. "The sole purpose of our coming here is to queue up," a man said laughingly.

King Pipi, the main character in Cartoon City, is really a funny character. His farm is most interesting, with cartoon-style fixings and decorations in the sitting room, study, bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom. The children are so strongly attracted to the farm that they ask their parents to decorate their own home just the same.





Almost Like a "Freely Falling Body"

At the Maya Beach you seem to have entered into an ancient Mayan Kingdom. There is water everywhere: rapids, shallows, deep pools, waterfalls and fountains. In the man-made Wave Pond, you can drift on the rapids to experience the sea environment and listen to "the surging tides".

In the huge banyan forest there are several dozen water slides of different types. They are not solely for fun but also test people's bravery. One water slide, which is the highest and steepest in Asia, is absolutely a challenge to everyone. About half of the people who have climbed to its top turn around and step down. Shaking his head, one gives the reason for giving up: "It's so steep that I'm afraid I would become a freely falling body!" Mostly, it is the young ladies who are bold enough and dare to go down at flying speed, creating a huge spray.

Shot Up in 1.8 Seconds

Another lively ride in the park is the 60-metre-high Space Shuttle, a high-tech ride of the 1990s imported from the United States. Firmly bound to a chair, you are shot up into mid-air in 1.8 seconds like a shell from a gun; the feeling is electrifying. It is out of the question to take a photo in the air, as for the sake of safety absolutely nothing is allowed to be taken onto the shuttle.

The riders scream shrilly in mid-air while onlookers on the ground roar with laughter. After several rounds of up and down, the shuttle slows down and returns to the ground.

Playing a Chinese Traitor's Part

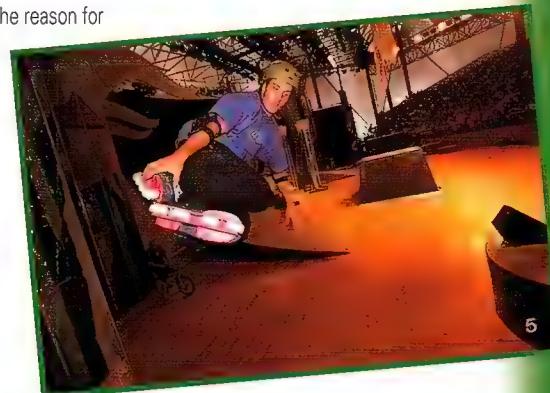
The Film and Television Studio is packed with visitors. A real scene of a northern village is set up in the spacious field, and a film about the Chinese War of Resistance Against Japan is being shot. To increase people's knowledge of film-making, three members of the audience are invited to take part. Two act as villagers while the other plays a Chinese traitor. Before it starts, the film director warns the traitor: "Be careful, there are mines everywhere."

The shooting begins, and the audience watches with bated breath. The traitor leads a gang of Japanese invaders into the village and soon falls into an ambush. Guns are fired and mines explode. The invaders flee helter-skelter, and their trucks are blown to pieces. More interestingly, the traitor becomes so panic-stricken that he runs as fast as his legs can carry him to the side of the villagers.

When the shooting is over, the audience applauds warmly and the old house which weighs 40 tons is turned to another angle for the next film.

A Performance of Extreme Sports

The Happy Theatre is a large arena with a capacity for an audience of 2,000. The size and position of its stage can be altered to suit the performance, and its front stand has an area where people can dine while watching. Recently, five young people from America gave performances here in the "extreme sports"; they were



1. Evening performance in the Happy Theatre
2. Restaurants and bars are everywhere in Happy Valley's commercial street.
3. Visitors are attacked by water cannons in the whirlpool.
4. It takes courage to slide down from such a height.
5. The "extreme sports" serve as an eye-opener for visitors. Being "launched off"

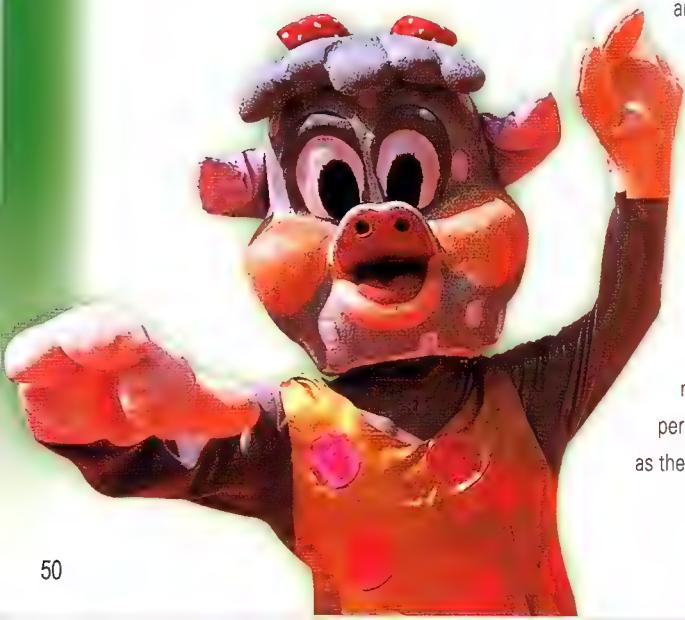




unrestrained as they zoomed around in a carefree style, and sometimes did somersaults. The incredible feats they achieved on their bicycles, skateboards, or roller skates on the special small platform at the centre of the stage or on the arched sides won warm applause from the audience.

Attacked by Water Cannons

Drifting along the Old Gold Mine River is a fascinating activity, particularly at twilight when the litchi trees on the banks are mysteriously highlighted. The circuit river course, 350 metres long, alternates between wide and narrow and fast and slow currents, and from time to time rapids and shoals appear. When the pneumatic boat comes across a whirlpool, it spins around rapidly. Every now and then water cannons make a surprise attack on the boat; if you are an unlucky person, you will undoubtedly get sprayed by them.

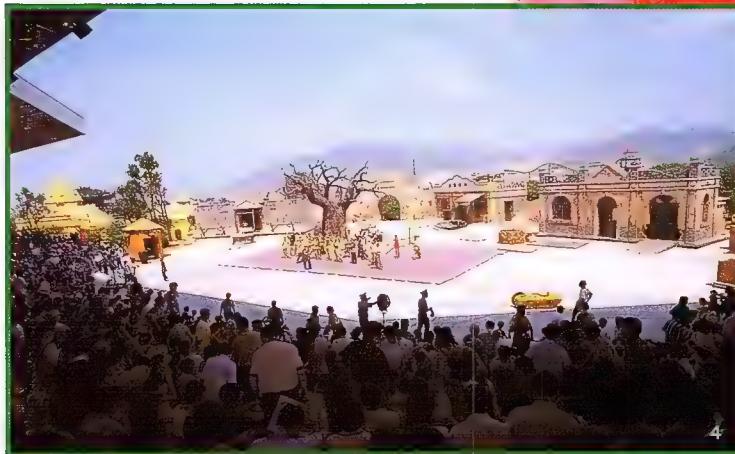


Magic Shows Have Plots

Performances begin in the theatre after nightfall. One of the brand-new shows is a typically European fairy tale which includes magic. It has three characters: a princess, a prince and a monster. The performers' superb magic powers and graceful dance movements as well as the unique combination of lights, including the newest lasers, enhance the

magic of the scene: the monster plays a trick, the princess suddenly disappears, but just as the prince rises to fight with the monster, the princess is cut apart. Altogether there are over 30 magic performances, all of which have a plot. Two other fascinating shows are "A Pagoda Turns into a Man", and "Money Comes out of Empty Hands". It is really a great new creation compared with traditional magic shows.

C



Tips for the Traveller

I. Admission Tickets and Service Charges:

General admission for Happy Valley: 90 yuan; half-price ticket: 45 yuan (includes admission to Maya Beach)

Admission to Maya Beach: 50 yuan; half-price ticket: 25 yuan (open from early May to mid-October)

Admission ticket to Music and Dance Water Theatre: 15 yuan, 20 yuan (VIP seats) (no charge when Maya Beach is closed)

Charge for drifting on the river: 10 yuan (no charge when Maya Beach is closed)

Electromobile: 10 yuan

Antique car: 10 yuan.

Note: Admission tickets are valid within the same day so visitors can go in and out on the same ticket throughout the day.

II. Open Hours: 9:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

III. Performance Schedules:

A. Happy Theatre

1. Extreme Sports: 11:30, 13:30, 15:00 from Tuesday to Sunday (Monday closed)

2. Happy Music and Dance Water Theatre: 19:30 daily

B. The Film and Television Studio:

Monday to Friday: 14:30, 16:30 Weekends and holidays: 10:30, 14:30, 16:30

C. Cartoon Theatre:

Monday to Friday: 12:30, 15:30, 16:30 Weekends and holidays: 11:00, 12:30, 15:30, 16:30

Note: Performance times may change.

IV. Public Transport

It is convenient to take a bus or taxi from Luohu Railway Station to Happy Valley. Take the following buses to the Window of the World and walk for three minutes to Happy Valley:

Buses: Nos. 26, 204, 209, 210, 222, 223, 101, 105, 113, 301, 310, 311, 320, 370.

Mini-buses: Nos. 423, 429, 432, 433, 434, 439, 453, 455, 462, 465, 502, 511, 514.

V. Food There are various restaurants on Happy Valley's commercial street: Qilin Tower and Chaozhou Restaurant are famous for Chinese food; Guzhibao specialises in Portuguese food; and fast-food places such as KFC and Noodle King. At the Happy Square there are bars such as Pintaoju, Indian Bar and Yelang Bar.

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1. The laser lights add lustre to magic shows.

2. Magic shows have a plot: here, the prince suffers again.

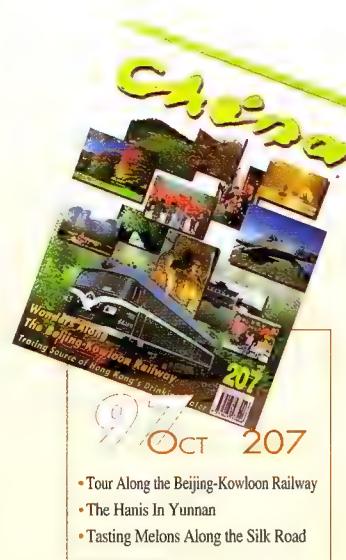
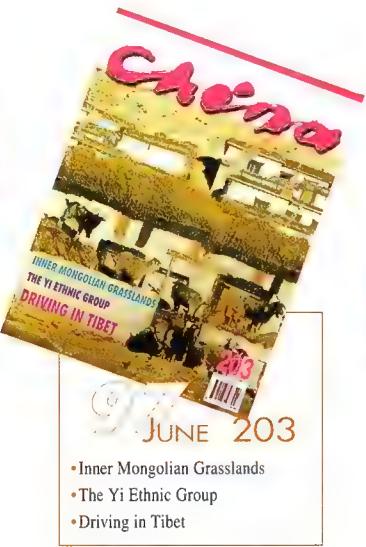
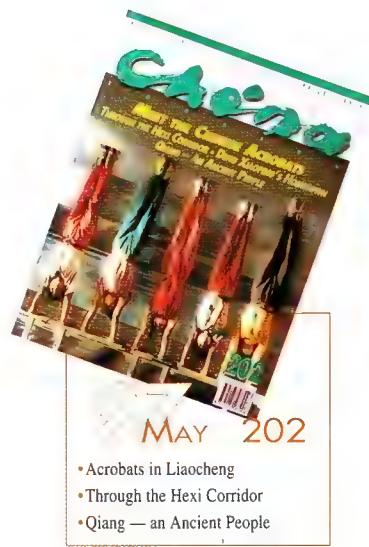
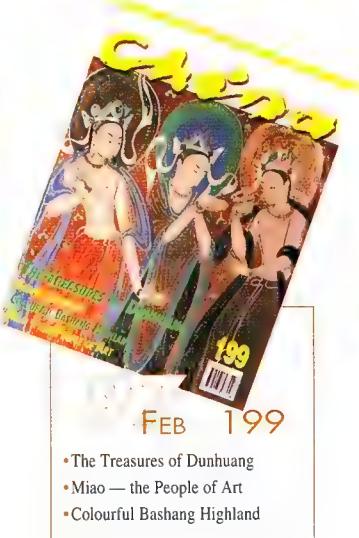
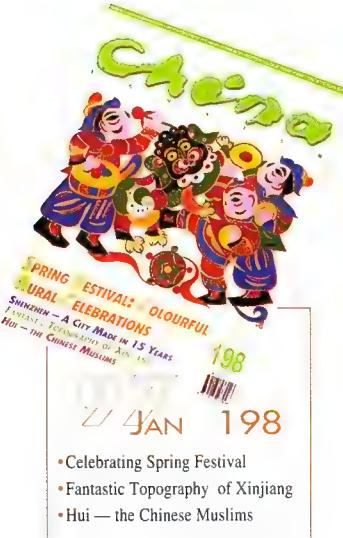
3. The fascinating Maya Beach

4. The Film and Television Studio shoots a War of Resistance Against Japan film.

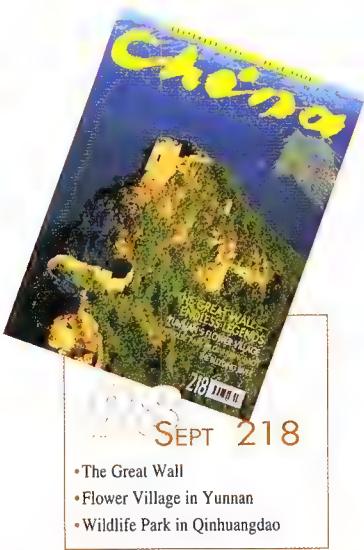
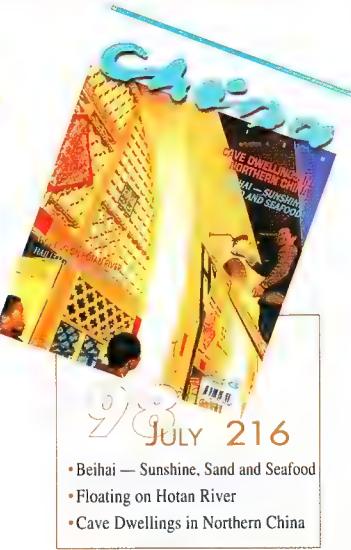
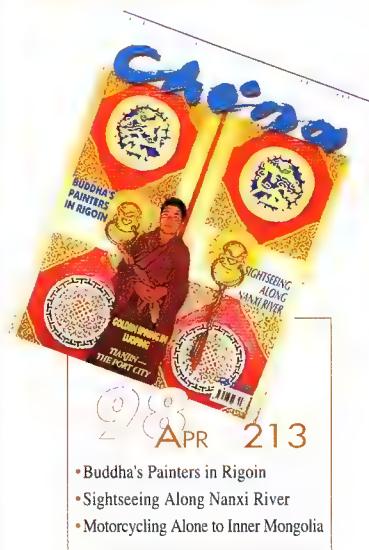
5. King Pipi's kitchen is a cartoon-lover's heaven.



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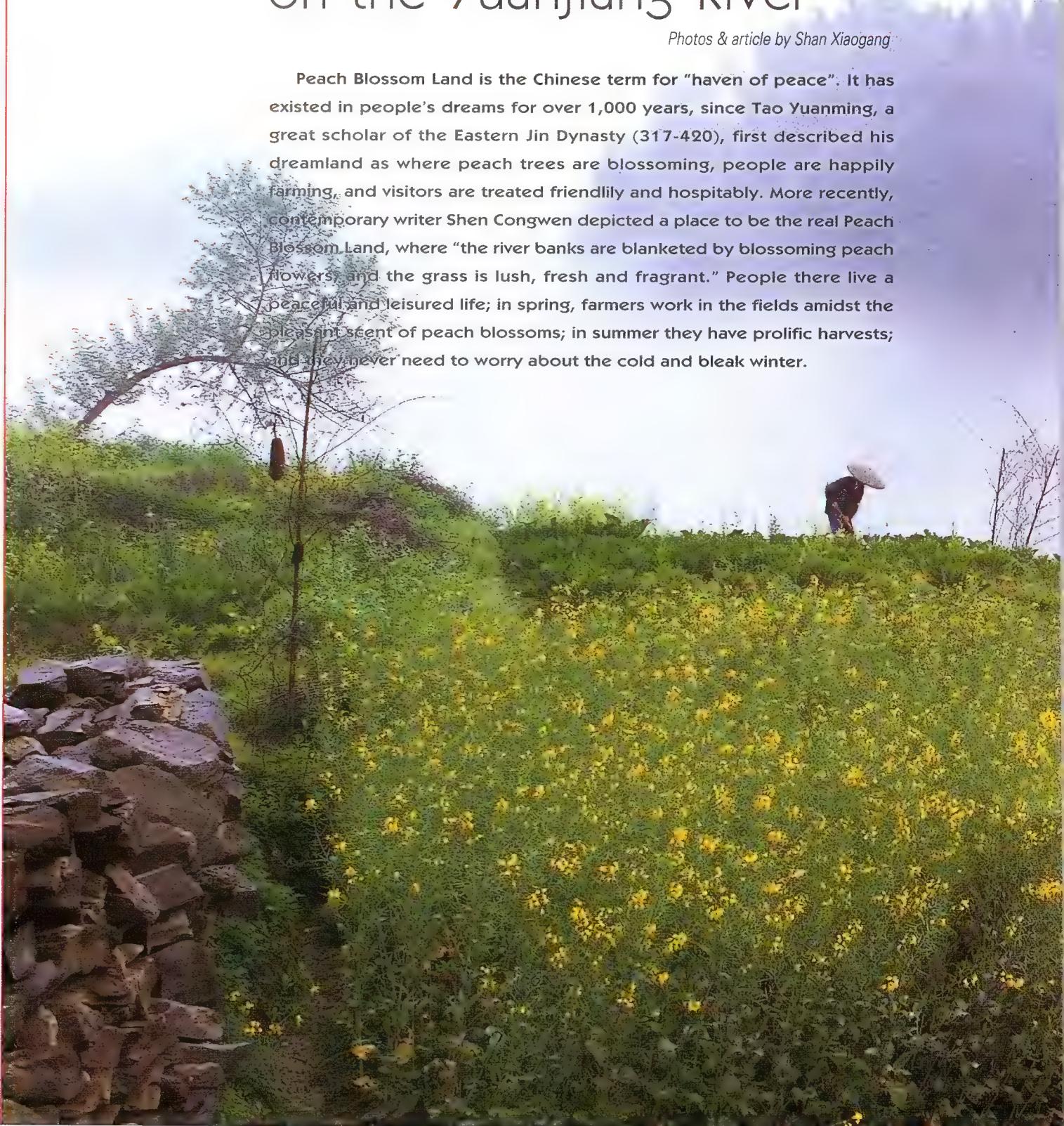
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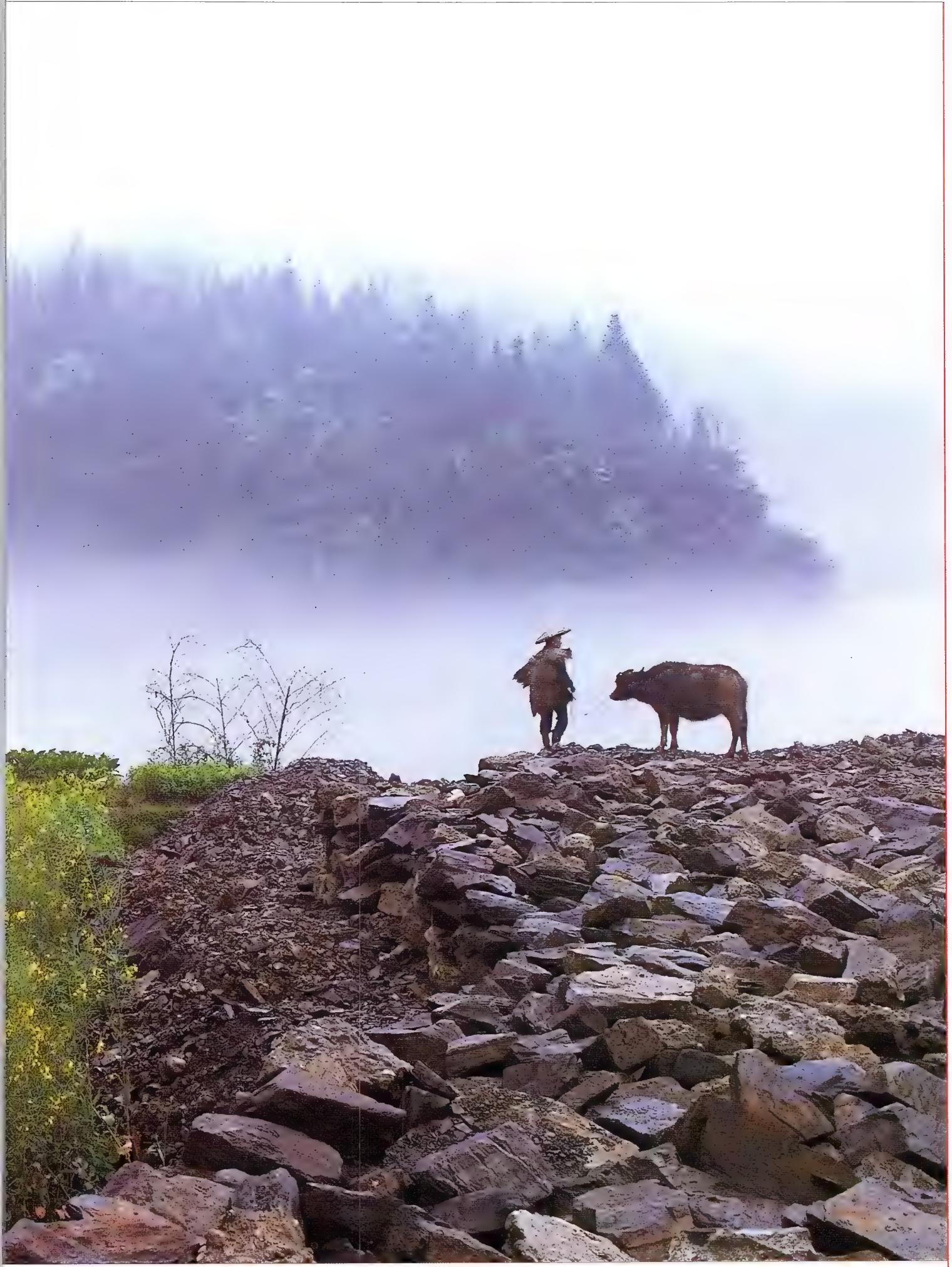
A Haven of Peace

on the Yuanjiang River

Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

Peach Blossom Land is the Chinese term for "haven of peace". It has existed in people's dreams for over 1,000 years, since Tao Yuanming, a great scholar of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420), first described his dreamland as where peach trees are blossoming, people are happily farming, and visitors are treated friendly and hospitably. More recently, contemporary writer Shen Congwen depicted a place to be the real Peach Blossom Land, where "the river banks are blanketed by blossoming peach flowers, and the grass is lush, fresh and fragrant." People there live a peaceful and leisured life; in spring, farmers work in the fields amidst the pleasant scent of peach blossoms; in summer they have prolific harvests; and they never need to worry about the cold and bleak winter.





On the Yuanjiang River Taohuayuan Tourist Area



Previous page: Heavenly scenery on earth

1. Villages and fields on the banks of Yuanjiang River
2. A village nestled deep in the haven of peace
3. Travellers looking for a new experience
4. The statue of Tao Yuanming, an Eastern Jin-dynasty scholar
5. Taohua Temple on the top of Taohua Mountain

Feeling hungry and thirsty, I ducked into a shop for a cup of the local Lei tea. Legend has it that a famous Han-dynasty general cured his troops of pestilence with this special kind of tea.

Towards Peach Blossom Land

I had the chance to visit Peach Blossom Land in Hunan Province in early spring, when the warmth brings out the blossoms.

The dock below the Wenchang Tower was crowded with tidy cruise boats named after famous scholars. I happened to embark on the *Qu Yuan*, named after a poet of the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.), which proceeded slowly upstream, giving me the opportunity to marvel at the landscape along the way. In the beginning the Yuanjiang River is as wide as the Yangtse, and the fields on both sides, dyed yellow by rape flowers, extend far and wide. Gradually the river narrows and begins to twist and turn. We came to a cliff, conch-shaped, and damp and green with moss. Legend says that the cliff was cleaved sharp and steep by the legendary ancient general Guan Yu with a knife in a fit of rage. The scenery shifted with the boat's progress and the mountains seemed to sway gently. The river's end is another world of green while the twin sandbars in its middle look like two ribbons.

At the Yaohe Ferry dock, I saw a giant ferry carrying cars across the river. The dock was thronged with passengers in motley attire. On the eastern shore terraces, huge willows provide shadows to a cluster of crimson pavilions. In the south the riverbank is taken over by jagged rocks which seem to resemble a sleeping dog. Four Chinese characters are inscribed on the cliff, meaning "Chivalrous Dog Guarding the River".

When our boat sailed past Dongzhou, the water foamed and bubbled. Beyond Zhangjiawan, trees stand thick along the river like an emerald screen. Before long the river makes two big turns and opens onto a wide course, where many fishing boats ply the waters. The shore on the left, known as

Bailingzhou, was where, as depicted by Tao Yuanming, the fisherman from Wuling abandoned his boat and entered Peach Blossom Land. Trying to catch a view, I could not but feel enthralled by the beauty of the scene.

Refreshed by the Famous Local Tea

I disembarked at Wenjin Pavilion and climbed up a grassy slope in the darkness of a cedar tree forest.

Through an archway with an iron gate on the southern side of the road spreads a peach orchard. Heading for the depth of the forest, I crossed the Peach Flower Stream, admired a chrysanthemum nursery, a stele corridor and bamboo with square stalks, took a look at the Linxian Studio, the Peach Flower Nunnery, and the Jixian Temple, and toured the Qinren Village. This was a beautiful place with bamboo groves, stone-paved footpaths, quiet ravines and sparkling springs, clear pools and fertile fields, but it did not seem to fit the description of a haven of peace. It was thronged with tourists, who, like me, might have been looking for the same Peach Blossom Land in their heart.

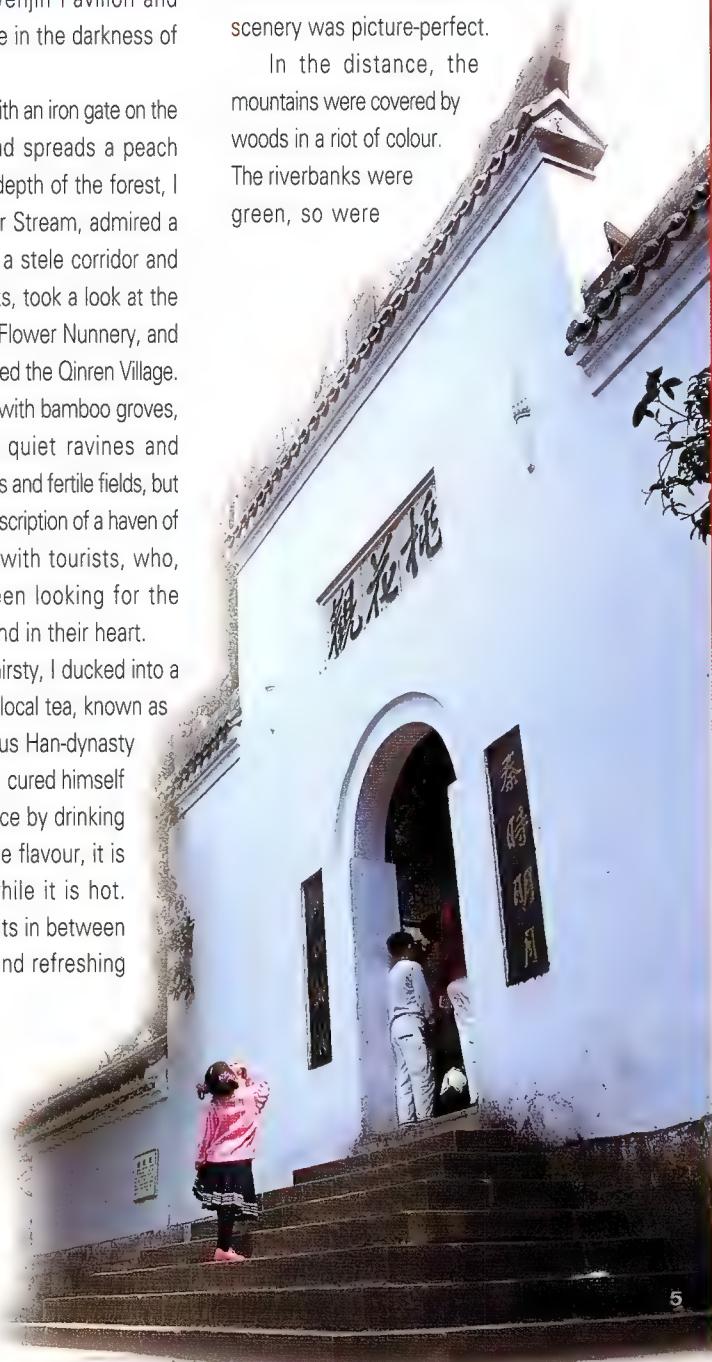
Feeling hungry and thirsty, I ducked into a shop for a cup of famous local tea, known as Lei tea. Ma Yuan, a famous Han-dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 24) general, cured himself and his troops of pestilence by drinking this tea. To fully enjoy the flavour, it is best to drink the tea while it is hot. Munching on refreshments in between sips is a most relaxing and refreshing experience.

A Natural Beauty

After tea, I climbed up a high tower which offers a broad view of the surroundings. The sun

was setting, dyeing everything golden. Behind the screen of trees on the opposite shore, the land is criss-crossed by footpaths, and chickens were crowing and dogs barking. Farmers were toiling behind ox-drawn ploughs in the fields. Smoke kept curling from the smokestacks of dwellings at the foot of the mountain. The scenery was picture-perfect.

In the distance, the mountains were covered by woods in a riot of colour. The riverbanks were green, so were



Under the eaves people were playing chess, chatting and washing. In a tiny traditional Chinese medicine pharmacy, an old doctor sat quietly with his eyes closed. In a furniture shop, workers turned trunks of bamboo into chairs, beds, and other things.

the streams. Against the backdrop of a blue smudge of mountains, the Yuanjiang River flowing from the west looked as smooth as a mirror. The Bailin Sand Bar resembled a curving buffalo horn dipped into the river, and the village on it glowed in the twilight of the setting sun.

Contented Village Life

Huangtupo Village to the southwest of Taohuayuan Town is surrounded by rape flower fields and rice paddies. A visit to the village was arranged for myself and a few Japanese tourists and we were met by Mr. Wang, a local farmer.

The Wangs' courtyard looked clean and tidy. The parlour was furnished with a dozen

or so chairs smelling of new cedar wood. The hostess offered us tea and oranges harvested from the family's own orchard. Behind the house is a hidden corridor that links all the rooms, which are rather big. Tap water is available in the kitchen. The air inside was heady with the fragrance of flowers growing outside the wall.

Paddy rice was growing in front of the courtyard, which is surrounded by citrus trees. Behind the house are a tea garden, a cedar grove, a fishpond and a vegetable garden. All the family's 3-hectare paddy fields are tilled by Wang and his wife, who are both in their 50s; their children work elsewhere.

During lunch the Wangs treated us with their own produce and the rice wine they had brewed, and before long we were all feeling its effects. Saying good-bye, the guests and the hosts embraced each other in tears. "To be a self-sufficient farmer is like living as an immortal," says Yamada, the eldest of the Japanese travellers.

An Ancient Riverside Town

In the upper reaches of the Chengxi, a tributary of the Yuanjiang River, there is an ancient town known as Shaping. It was market day when I arrived, and the town was thronged with people.

Those from the surrounding village were selling mountain produce; the money

thus earned is used to buy daily necessities. Old men were attired in old fashions, and the shops, built of traditional brick-and-wood structure, looked old.

In one of the jewellery shops the goldsmith turned out to be a beautiful woman in her 20s. She was able to produce a gold ring in a short time, going through the entire process from melting, casting and polishing. She told me that she buys gold from gold panners up the Yuanjiang River and purified it to high quality herself.

A stream runs by a street right in the heart of the town. Under the eaves people were playing chess, chatting and washing. In a tiny traditional Chinese medicine pharmacy an old doctor sat quietly with his eyes closed. In a workshop, workers turned trunks of bamboo into chairs, beds, stools, baskets and other things.

Ms. Zhang, sunning herself in front of a house, was wearing gold rings on both hands. She told me that fashionable women in town usually wear as many as eight gold rings, three pairs of gold earrings, and two bracelets, which are supplemented with ankle chains and diamond rings.

With its people living in contentment in a peaceful environment, this ancient town really seems to be a sanctuary.

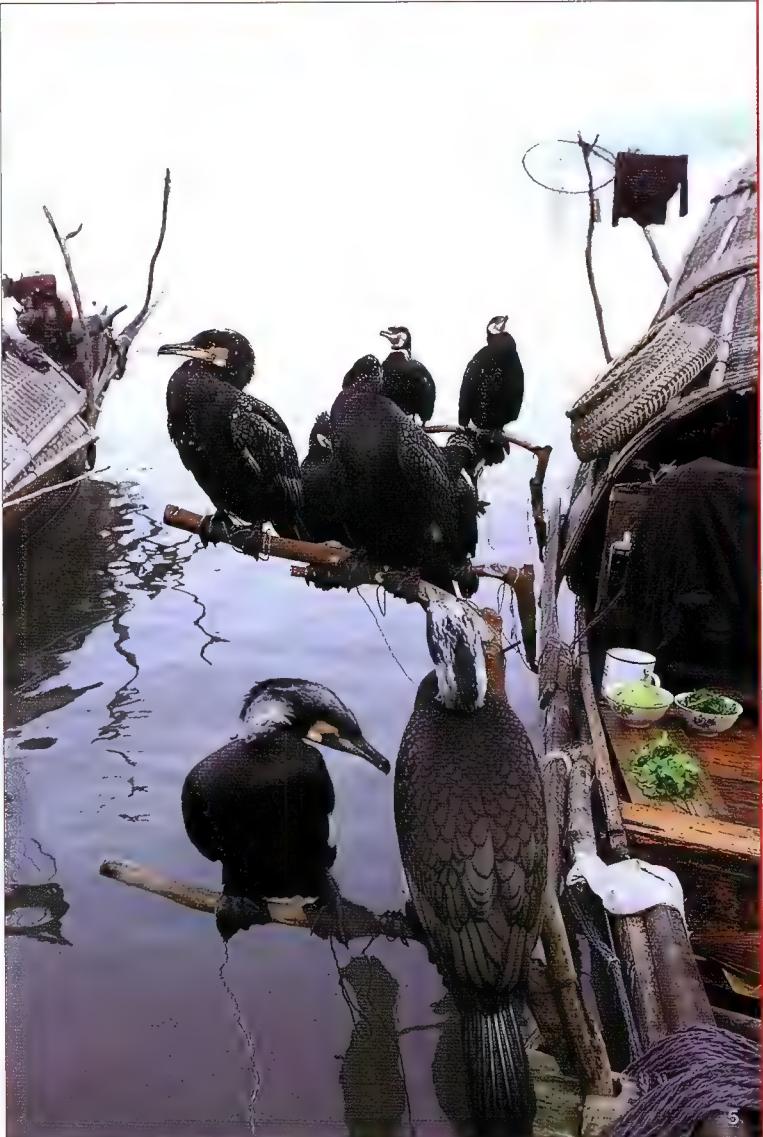
Catching Fish with Cormorants

Later in the afternoon I discovered a group of fishing boats with cormorants berthed by the river at Yanxikou in the eastern part of Taoyuan. The fishermen aboard were cooking. The cormorants, having worked hard during the day, were perched on the gunwale in silence, their dark forms quivering reflections in the water.

The cormorant has such sharp sight that it can see fish at a distance of 10 metres. Once the cormorant dives into the river, it



On the Yuangjiang River
Traditional Villages



1. This carp will soon be sold for rice on the market.
2. A lovely girl of a fisherman's family
3. A fisherman's dinner table
4. A street market in Shaping Town
5. Boats with cormorants berthed at Luci Shoal

On the Yuangjiang River
Yiwang Stream

1. Farming in a fairyland
2. The mouth of Yiwang Stream in morning mist
3. Bamboo shoots, signals of spring



The fishermen began casting their nets. A clear demarcation could be seen on the water's surface: the stream water is crystal clear, reflecting the surroundings perfectly, whereas the river water is silt-ridden and swirls as it flows.

swims as fast as an arrow, and few fish escape. If the fish happens to be too big to be tackled alone, several cormorants team up to lift it up for their master.

A World of Mist

The next day, despite the rain, I took the bus to Jiangzhen Town after lunch. Thirty kilometres later, a ferry brought me across the river to Xinglongjie. After I checked into a local inn, I took a walk along the river until dark. Frogs were croaking, and the paddy fields teeming with activity. Fireflies were everywhere; I caught one whose tail glowed green and yellow in my hands. Voices filtered up from the dock where a dark form slid into the water. Then all became quiet again; only the river's rippling music remained.

The next morning, the continuing rain had driven the mist up the distant mountain. A shipping fleet sailed upstream, as if raising the curtain on another day of life. When the rain stopped I took a taxi into the mountains to the Yiwang Stream to view the "sea" of bamboo there. All the way the mist unexpectedly kept thickening; everything was obliterated by the thick white pall.

At the Zhuyuan Power Station I had a delicious dish of fish stewed with bamboo shoots and mushrooms. Unable to resist the invitation of the hospitable hosts, I downed one cup after another of heated rice wine.

When I went outside, I found the world had brightened up. A bamboo grove was skirted on all four sides by a screen of fog; this place has all the makings of a celestial world. Rape flowers tinted the riverbank golden, set off nicely by the green grass. A weeping willow spread its foliage over the river. On the banks farmers wearing bamboo hats and palm-bark rain coats were busy with farm chores, cutting grass by the side of a

vegetable garden, or watering a buffalo by the stream. All this, however, disappeared into the mist in a few minutes' time.

An Immortal's Stone Cave

Water flows abundantly in the Yiwang Stream, the longest tributary of the Yuanjiang River. If not for the hydroelectric power station, one could raft the entire length of the stream. I rented a tiny boat for a cruise. The foot of the cliff that rises over the river is overgrown with flowers and grass. In the bamboo groves, sprouts were shooting out as if competing with one another.

The next morning the river was enveloped in dense mist. I rented a boat for another visit to the Shuixinzhai Water-Centre Village. The mist evaporated along the way, but poured out of the estuary of the stream once again at the village. The sky and water mingled together, and the peaks and cliffs, half hidden in the mist, were faintly reflected in the water. As the mist floated about the peaks, fishermen, who had stayed on the river overnight, began casting their nets. A clear demarcation could be seen on the water's surface: the stream water is crystal clear, and as smooth as a mirror, reflecting the surroundings perfectly, whereas the water in the river is silt-ridden and swirls as it flows.

I continued my random cruise up the river. Beyond the Zhenghe Ferry, Chuanshi Cliff, a famous sight of this Peach Blossom Land, lies like a

colossal turtle, its head craning to the sky, seemingly venting its grievances. Legend says that the huge hole on the cliff came about when Zhang Guolao, one of the Taoist Eight Immortals, poked the cliff with his punting pole in a moment of desperation to steer his boat clear of rapids and shoals. Today, when the river surges, the water flows right through the cave.

I climbed over a big dam and rented another boat for my upstream journey. Azaleas were in blossom on the cliff's edge while the entrance to the ravine was thronged with men and women carrying bamboo baskets on their way to pick tea leaves.



On the Yuangjiang River
Qinglang Rapids



1. Reading on a bamboo raft
2. Husband and wife working co-operatively to punt their boat onto a shoal
3. A beautiful wooden residential building in Jieshou Village
4. The rapids on Wongzi River
5. A comfortable bamboo chair for the child

The further on up the river, the clearer the water becomes. When we sailed by, numerous egrets, who were feeding on the pebbly beaches, dispersed into the sky like white clouds.

At the estuary of the Xianren Stream I saw a row of big boats, bound together and with cabins built atop them. Obviously, these were the gold-panning ships that the woman goldsmith at Shaping had mentioned.

Haven of Peace Everywhere

The black, shiny passenger boat I had boarded at Xianren Stream was operated by a couple. The wife, Yang Yinyu, was a candid and capable woman. The further up the river we went, the clearer the water and the more graceful the mountains. When we sailed by, numerous egrets, who were feeding on the pebbly beaches, dispersed into the sky like white clouds.

The boat stopped every now and then to accommodate passengers. During the later section of the journey, most of the passengers left onboard were friends or relatives of one family on their way to an elder's birthday party.

When we sailed past the Dafu Stream, the scenery became even more beautiful. New fishing boats were anchored at the riverside while dilapidated ones were

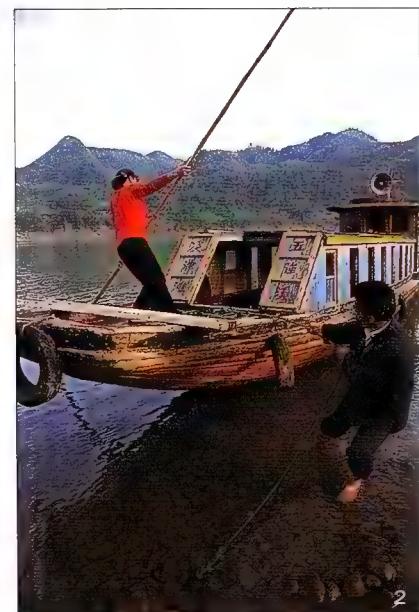


abandoned here and there ashore. The muddy beaches, dotted with a lush verdure of grass, were studded with purple and yellow patches of wild flowers. Water buffaloes, goats and horses grazed nonchalantly.

The Jieshou Cliff, perched on the boundary between Changde and Qianyan prefectures, is a stone split in two. In the distance a number of giant peaks penetrated the sky like bamboo shoots, winning the name Standing Feet. Legend says that Zhang Guolao had used these peaks to prop up his wok and the muddy water of the Mitang (Rice Gruel) Stream, is believed to be the spilt rice gruel from the old immortal's pot.

boat nosed its way up the stream gingerly, for a mere slip of attention could mean disaster.

The boat finally pulled through this dangerous section, and proceeded along



The Widow's Chains

The section of the Yuanjiang River we were sailing on was the Qinglang Rapids. After passing the Standing Feet Cliffs, we pulled up to the Wongzi Cave, where lies one of the most dangerous rapids. The wife stood up at the bow to observe the currents and test the depth with her punting pole. Her husband stared intently at the movement of the bow. The



Anything may be carried in a women's back pack basket, from infants to mountain produce. The grace and industry of the rural women are palpable by merely looking at the bamboo baskets on their backs.

close to the cliff edge. A plank path appeared midway up the cliff face. An old passenger said that the path was made for boat trackers. The path's railings, composed of iron rings and chains, were built with donations from the widow of a boat tracker who had fallen from the cliff and died, hence its name "Widow's Chains".

At the next station, an ancient town called Mayifu on the northern bank, the white-bearded old man who had been

telling legendary stories on the ship left. Seeing his back vanish on shore, I wondered if he were one of the immortals living in this fairyland.

Cultural Relics in Yuanling

I boarded a speedboat to whisk me from the Wuqiang Stream to the city of Yuanling by cruising through the reservoir. This tour afforded views of a village standing in the water on stilts, the ruins of a pagoda atop the Luming Mountain and the Longyin Pagoda at the head of a sand bar. The heroine of one of Shen Congwen's folklore stories, the Zhou family's beautiful daughter, had lived in the citrus orchard on the southern bank. The Singing Phoenix

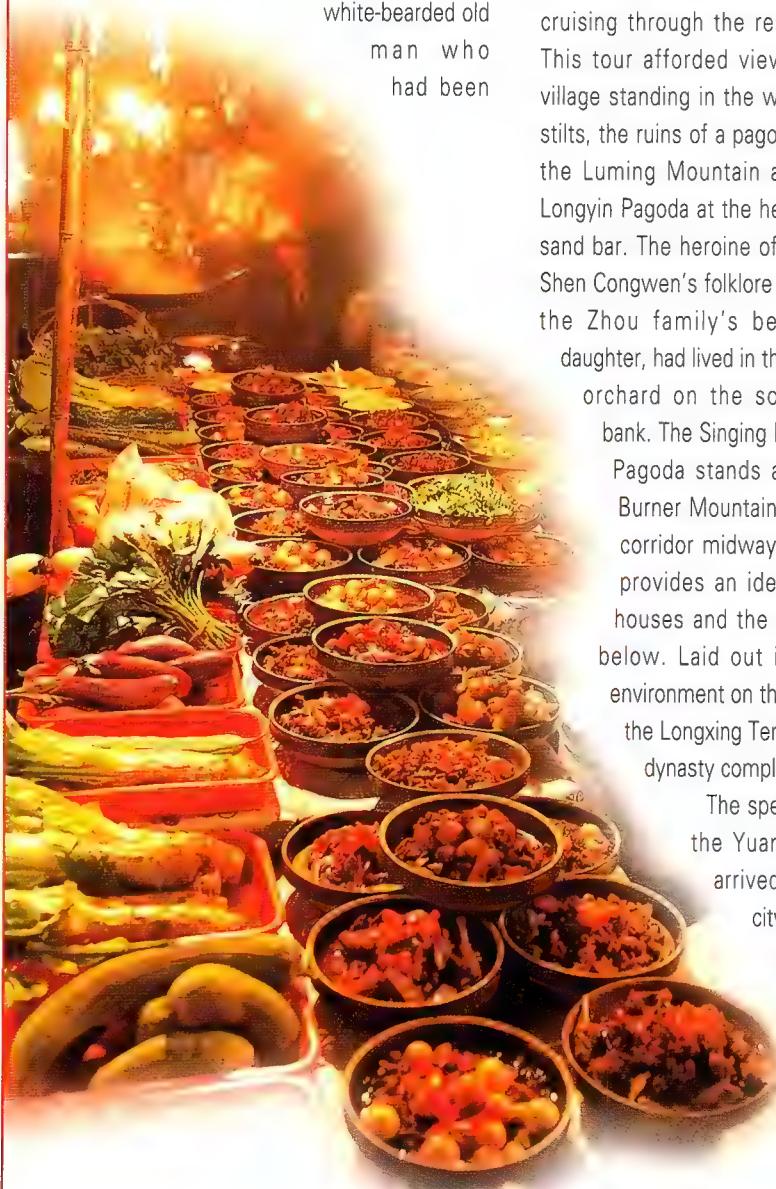
Pagoda stands atop the Incense Burner Mountain, and the bamboo corridor midway up the mountain provides an ideal view over the houses and the meandering river below. Laid out in a picturesque environment on the opposite bank is the Longxing Temple, a giant Tang-dynasty complex.

The speedboat sped past the Yuanshui Bridge and arrived at the southern city gate dock, which opens onto a seemingly interminable street extending into the depths of the



town. The street is lined with at least 1,000 shops selling every conceivable variety of goods. But nothing is more typical of the city than its women folk with their bamboo baskets on their backs. Anything may be carried in such a basket, from infants to mountain produce. The grace and industry of these women are palpable by merely looking at the bamboo baskets on their backs.

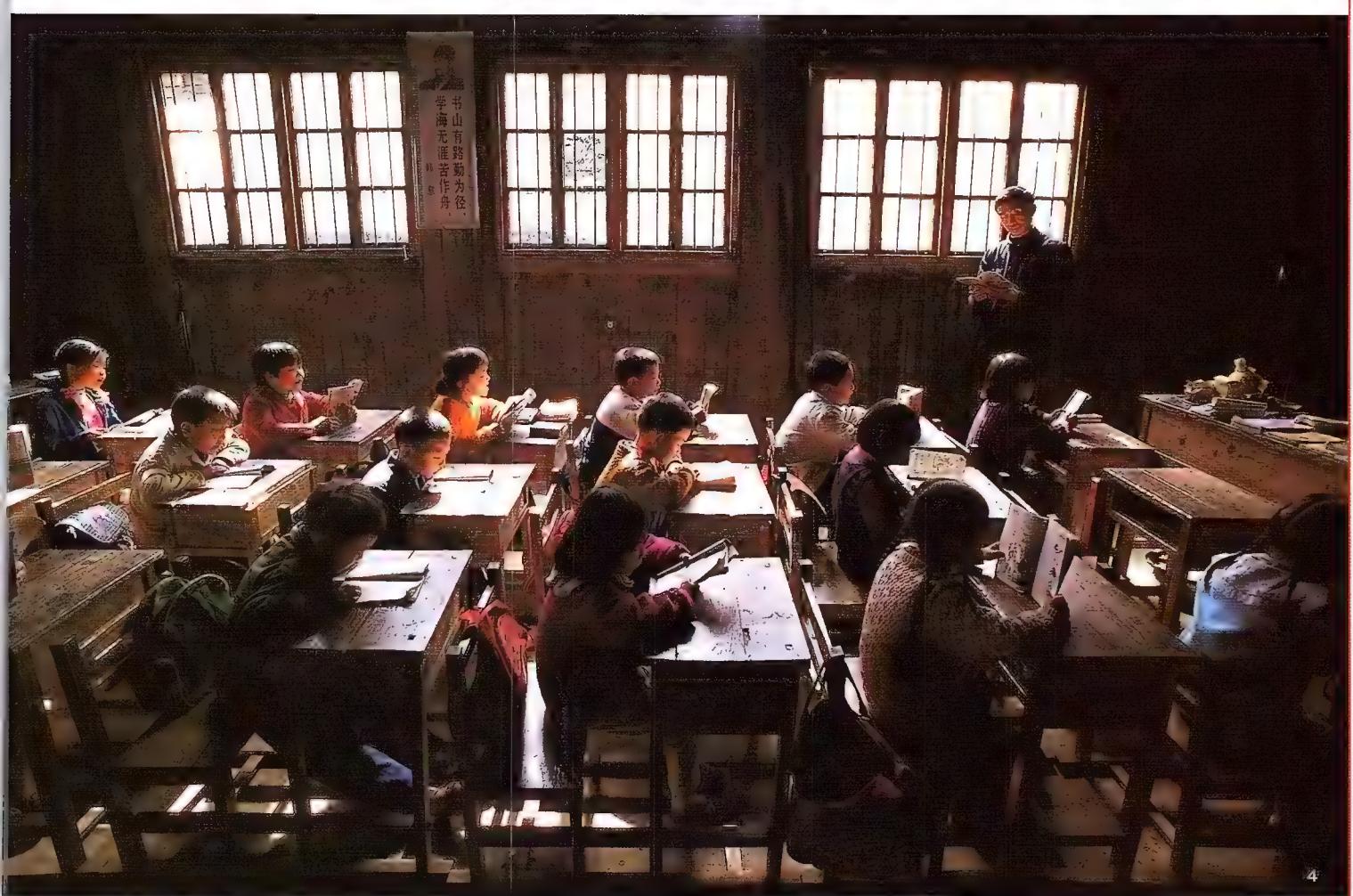
Translated by Ling Yuan



1. Fengming Pagoda by the Yuanjiang River in the east of Yuanling
2. Food booths along the Yuanjiang River
3. The bamboo corridor up the Incense-Burner Mountain provides an ideal observation post for viewing the scenery of the Yuanjiang River
4. A mountain village school by the Yuanjiang River

On the Yuangjiang River
Yuangling Town

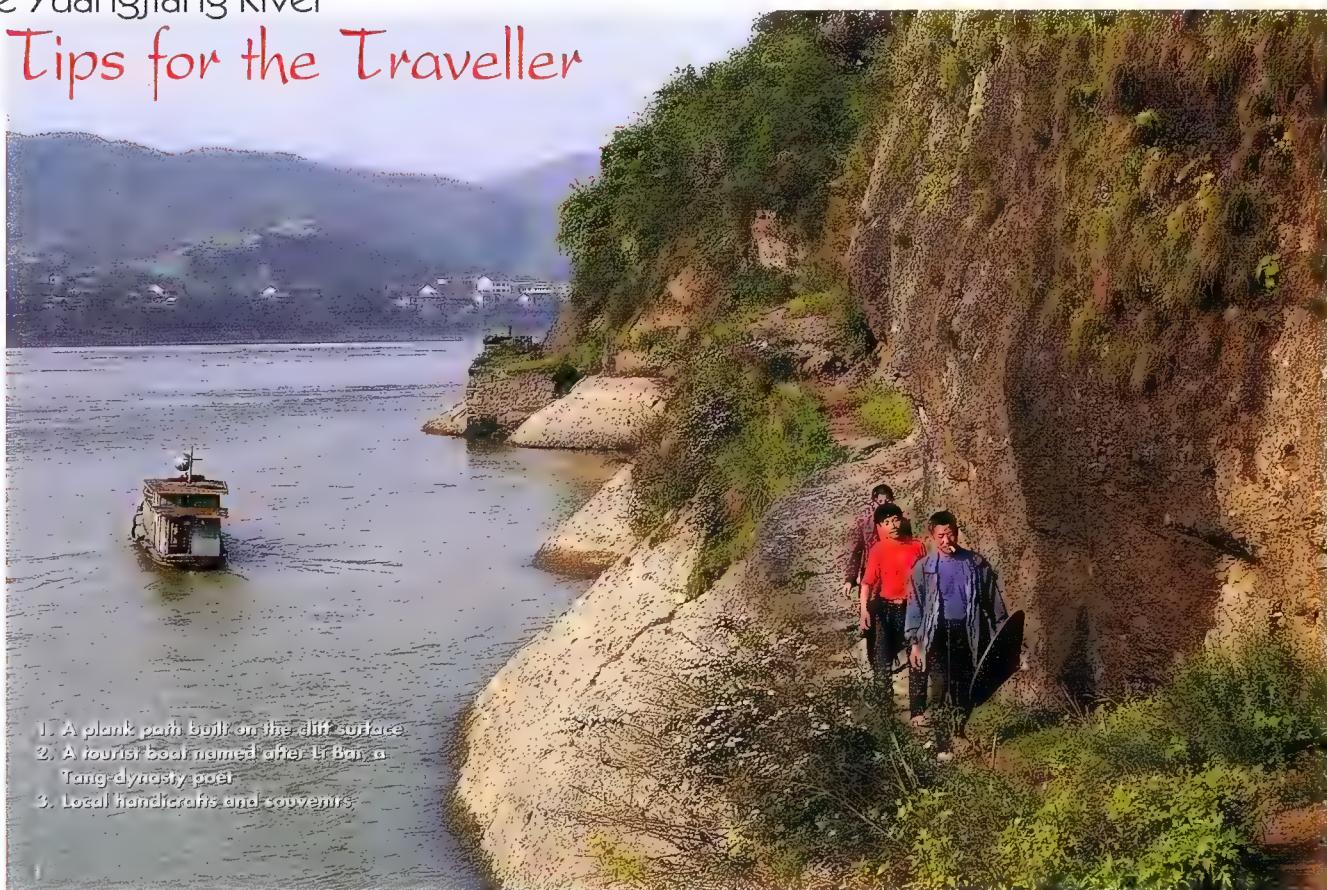
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On the Yuanjiang River

Tips for the Traveller



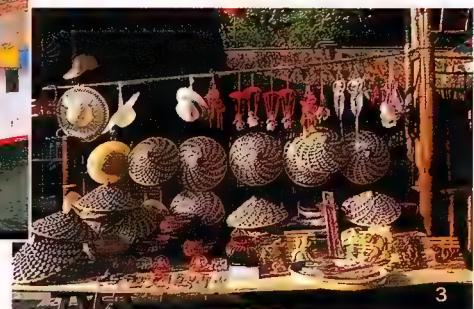
Transportation: From Hunan's capital, Changsha, take the express bus from the Western Long-Distance bus station to Changde; mini-buses there take you to Taoyuan County. The county operates a number of bus lines to the Peach Blossom Land, the Lingjin Shoals, and Xinglong Street. Tour boat rental costs vary with the boat's size, the time and the journey's length. Sailing up the river requires a more powerful boat, at daily fees of 100-200 yuan. The section between Taoyuan and Yuanling is navigable, but it is advisable to rent a boat at each section to save time and avoid troubles in a long journey. The entire journey up the river takes about one week.

Food and Lodging: At the seat of Taoyuan County the Yanxi Hotel offers standard rooms at rates between 168 and 198 yuan, and the guesthouse of the local science and technology association has standard rooms for 50 yuan per night. Dishes stewed in a large earthenware pots, sold usually at night markets such as Xiang'er and Quan'er food streets, for a few yuan to several dozen yuan apiece, are the best of all local delicacies. Local specialities include gold, diamonds and tea. There are also inns at Xinglongjie and Mayifu, where rates range from 20 to 60 yuan. In Yuanling, the Yuanling Hotel charges 70-120 yuan for a standard room; the food served in the Tianning Market and the Food Street is known for its excellent taste. Local produce includes tea, tobacco and bamboo baskets.

Best Time to Go: Spring (March-April) and Autumn (September-October).



遊沅江覽「桃源」路線示意圖
Tourist Map of the Yuanjiang River Valley





The Manchus' Folk Performance

Legacy of Qing-dynasty Hunting

Photos & article by Yang Libo

The strongly rustic art performance of the Manchu ethnic group, popular in northern Hebei, is a folk custom with distinct features.

In 1681 during the Qing Dynasty, the imperial Mulan Hunting Ground was established and many temporary dwellings for the emperor were built along the way from Beijing to the hunting ground. When the emperor and the royal family stayed at these places, many activities, such as wrestling, horse races and archery were held to please them. As time went by, it developed into a folk art performance among the Manchus. In the middle and late Qing Dynasty this art form became widespread and turned into an

activity for both the Manchus and Hans to celebrate the harvest and plead for good farming weather. The names of the folk performances are very imaginative, traditional, interesting and humorous, including the Weihu (Boat) Race, Sawing Huge Pole, The Conqueror's Sword, Wrestling by Two Devils, Eight Immortals Celebrating Birthday, Ten Non-idlers, and Fight Between Tigers and Dragons.

Most of the performers start learning from strict masters in their childhood, thus their performances are marvellous and breathtaking. The Manchu folk art performance has a strict organisation and performance pattern. Usually, several nearby villages form a society, and each one prepares its own programs and elects its own leaders. In the regional centre there is an elected general manager called "The Festival Official". Most of these "officials" are prominent figures; they collect funds and co-ordinate programs. As they were given the supreme power during the festival in the past, they were known as "Three-day Officials".

The performance starts from the 13th day of the first lunar month. There is first a trial show at village centres. From the 14th to the 16th day is the performance period. By invitation, the performing

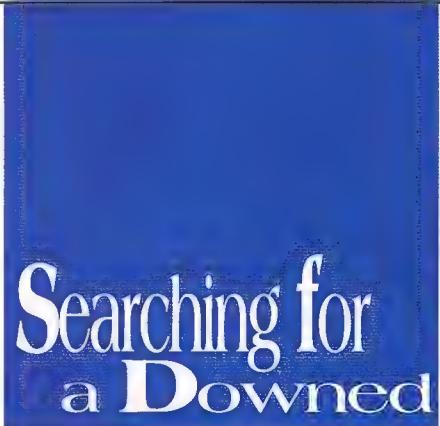


teams move from village to village. Households that they pass by all set off firecrackers to welcome them and offer cakes, candies, fruit and cigarettes. The 16th day is the closing day, on which all performances come to an conclusion.



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1. The mighty performing teams go from village to village, creating a lively New Year atmosphere. (by Feng Xianming)
2. Stilts walkers sitting on the walls waiting to perform in the nearby villages
3. Gongs, drums, cymbals are all under one person's control. This is a traditional Manchu performance.



Searching for a Downed

World War II Plane

Photos & article by Li Xu

For Fletcher Hanks, an American man in his 80s, to find the C-53 cargo plane which crashed into Yunnan's Gaoligong Mountain during the Second World War, had long been a cherished dream. Now, this was his chance to return to Gaoligong Mountain.

A Dream for 53 Years

"Let's go! Let's go!" Mr. Hanks shouted as we stood on the mountain by a river at 3,300 metres above sea level. In the thick forest, we felt like the largest group of humans ever to set foot at such high altitude. Apart from Mr. Hanks, a veteran American pilot who flew in China during the World War II, our team consisted of Mr. Han Wenbin, director of the Aeronautics Museum of China, and 10 others, including a TV cameraman, an experienced doctor, and two fully armed frontier guards to protect us from wild animals and other dangers. In addition, there were eight locals hired to carry various sorts of equipment. Mr. Yan Jiangzheng, the leader of our expedition, had set off with three locals, carrying compasses and a Global Positioning System (GPS). They forged ahead, cutting a trail for us and approaching the downed plane with great difficulty. We followed the orange trail marks they had left. We tried to take breaks frequently for fear Mr. Hanks could not handle it, yet, he was impatient and shouted at us to move faster since he had already waited 53 years!

The Dangerous WWII Hump Line

Over half a century ago, Mr. Hanks flew over this mysterious Gaoligong mountain range several hundred times as a pilot for Pan-Am. Many of his comrades as well as their aircraft had vanished deep in these mountains. One of them was Jim Fox who piloted the C-53 cargo plane of the China Civil Aviation Company (CCAC). Over the years, it had become Mr. Hanks' dream to find the plane.

In mid-1942, the War of Resistance Against Japan entered a critical stage. The Yunnan-Burma Highway (also called the Stilwell Highway) — the only road by which the Allies delivered aid to China for its fight against the Japanese — was cut off by the Japanese army that occupied Burma. Thus the governments of China and the United States urgently decided to open an air corridor from India to China to send in the much needed war supplies. This air corridor totalling 880 kilometres, went from Assam, India, to airports in Kunming, Chenggong, Songming and Yanglin, Yunnan. Very quickly the Japanese discovered the route and sent out their No. 5 Air Division





f i g h t e r s
stationed in
Burma to
intercept the
Allies' aircraft.
The route was
then forced to
curve to the
north, over the
"Roof of the

World" — the Himalayas — and to increase the flying distance to 1,120 kilometres. The planes often had to fly dangerously between mountain peaks over 5,150 metres above sea level. The air route resembled the humps of a camel, hence, its nickname, the Hump Line.

Over a period of three years, the Hump Line brought more than 800,000 tons of goods to China, making it the route that carried the most war supplies into the country during the war. But the cost was high, though few people are aware of the figures. According to incomplete statistics, 563 aircraft were lost, of which 107 disappeared, and more than 1,500 crew lost their lives, of whom more than 1,300 were Americans.

Flying Over Fox Pass 70 Times

On March 11, 1943, the C-53 cargo plane took off from the Kunming Airport with its captain Jim Fox, Hong Kong native assistant pilot Tan Xuan (Thom) and radio operator Wang Guoliang from Guangdong Province towards Dinjan, India. Unfortunately, the plane crashed in a relatively wide mountain pass on Gaoligong Mountain's main peak. Yet, it seemed to be fairly intact and the cabin looked so perfect people had the impression the crew was still in control. Apparently, the plane made a controlled, forced landing and all the aircraft crews flying over believed the C-53 crew members were still alive. Since the area was under Japanese occupation, a land search was impossible. Aircraft flying over the mountain pass even signalled by turning on their take-off and landing lights, hoping to see a wave from the C-53 crew. Mr. Hanks himself had flown over that pass at very low altitude over 70 times, but never saw any trace of the crew members. The mountain pass was then called Fox Pass by the pilots flying the Hump Line.

A Search Was Done in 1944

We forged ahead along the mountain ridges that Mr. Hanks traversed half a century ago. In June 1944 the Chinese army crossed the Nujiang River and pushed westward 96 kilometres to re-capture control of this area. At the request of Mr. Fox's relatives and in co-operation with the CCAC, Mr. Hanks joined a search team in October that year to Pianma Pass

to search for the downed C-53. However, due to lack of food and water, they became exhausted and had to turn back when they were very close to the plane. Ever since then, the whereabouts of the C-53 and its crew had remained a mystery — a mystery that had bound the lives of Mr. Hanks and the Fox family.

Fox's C-53 Is There!

On June 10, 1997, Mr. Hanks flew to China again, this time from the United States. He joined a Chinese team organised by the Exploration Association of China to search for the C-53 plane. "Although 53 years have passed," he said with great confidence, "I still wish to follow the same route again to realise my dream." When our motorcade drove along a mountain highway to Pianma Pass that did not exist 53 years ago, Mr. Hanks recognised the Gutanhe Village, which his first search team had used as their main expedition camp. He jumped out of the vehicle, staring at the village for a long time and getting very excited. Just then, an eagle flew over the mountain valley. "Fox's C-53 is there!" he shouted.

Anticipating this day, he had kept himself in excellent physical condition. At the age of 71, he even joined a marathon in Maryland State and came first in the old age group. On this trip to China, while staying at the Holiday Inn in Kunming, every day he spent an hour climbing up and down the stairs from the first to the 18th floor five times. His vigour astonished us and everyone at the hotel.

Five Days to Cover a Short Distance

The hardships of the journey went far beyond all our expectations. Although a mountain highway had been built to Pianma Pass, Gaoligong Mountain, now a national nature reserve, still remained as mysterious and dangerous. From Pianma Pass, which was covered in misty rain at an altitude of 3,150 metres, we climbed to a peak at 3,300 metres, then followed the mountain ridge with nary a trace of humans, and cut a trail through thick bamboo groves. Only then we came to realise how much of an adventure our trip really was.

In the mist covering the entire Gaoligong Mountain our team seemed



1. The site where the C-53 plane was found
2. A bonfire means hope for people caught in the rain in the wild.
3. Mr. Hanks recognised the village he had passed more than 50 years ago.

as insignificant as a small boat on a vast expanse of ocean. For the past half century, Mr. Hanks had stared countless times at the mountain range on the map, but he had forgotten everything about the road. On the map, the straight-line distance between Pianma Pass and Fox Pass was only seven to eight kilometres. The C-53 plane crashed in the forest some 100 metres to the south of the Fox Pass. Yet, it took our team five whole days to cover this theoretically short distance.

A Recurring Dilemma

On the first day, we could not catch up with the advance group and even failed to reach their previous day's camp. At nightfall, we found a piece of relatively flat ground to provide us with some protection against the wind, and managed with great difficulty to put up three tents. We all had a sleepless night. We had to carefully ration our water supply; one of the dangers Mr. Hanks faced 53 years ago threatened us again. In the early dawn we set off again after a quick breakfast. In this part of the world, one rarely sees anything else but thickets of bamboo. I believe I will never see so much bamboo for the rest of my life. Often, our heavy knapsacks stuck firmly in the bamboo and it required great effort to pull them through. The going was rough and our energy sapped. Sometimes we had to crawl on all fours. Even now, I consider it a small miracle for the octogenarian Mr. Hanks to have managed so well.

The Hidden Strength in an Old Man's Body

By noon the next day, we reached the No. 10 boundary tablet along the Sino-Myanmar frontier. The distance from there to the downed plane was four to five kilometres, and there was no path in sight. By 3 p.m. we caught up with the advance group who looked severely exhausted and we lit a campfire. Mr. Hanks was not used to the smoky fire, but he had to put up with it to avoid being wet and cold. Looking at him, I marvelled at the hidden strength in his thin body and wondered why he was so

determined. This was not a mission he absolutely had to do. He had no reason to leave the comfort of his home in Maryland, where he had his own company to promote the jacuzzi he himself invented. Yet, still he came to the mountains of Yunnan to look for a plane that crashed over half a century ago, even though he had never met Mr. Fox.

A Lover of Adventure

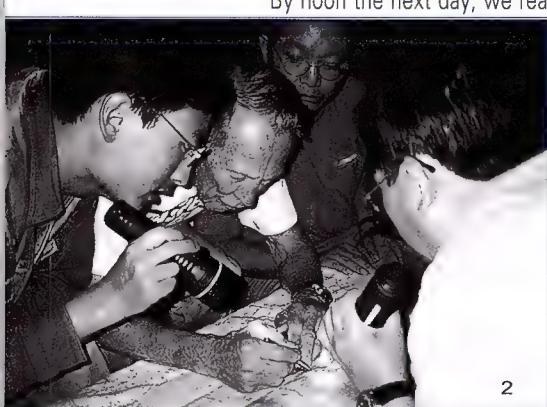
Mr. Hanks wore a T-shirt he had brought from the United States. On the front was a drawing of a plane crashing into snowy mountain peaks with the figure "1943". On the back was a plane flying over the Nujiang River Valley, with "1996". He brought quite a few of them and gave each of us one as a gift.

In curiosity, I asked him why he came to look for the plane. He said that the plane was a symbol and a testimony for the co-operation between the United States and China in fighting the Japanese. In addition, he wanted to find the plane so as to let Mr. Fox's family know their beloved one's whereabouts. "The last reason," he smiled, "is that I love adventure."

There was also something that had already linked Hanks with China. His great, great grandfather had once brought a tree back from China. It was perhaps that tree that planted in his heart the seed of love for China and gave him his most unforgettable memories — both in the sky and on land — in China.

Quenching Our Thirst

Going over another mountain ridge, we set up camp on a slope at nightfall. After two days of hard walking, Mr. Hanks stopped urging us on. Silently, he shivered as he faced the wet tent and sleeping bag. Compared with the situation here, the primitive hotel room that he mocked a week ago in the small town of Pianma was paradise. The next day, we searched and trudged around the wet and dark bamboo forest deep in the mountains where the footprints and excrement of black bears were everywhere. Our clothes never dried out. We collected the water on our tents and raincoats to quench our thirst. The food we had brought with us was almost gone. The bamboo forest turned more and more ghastly as the rain became heavier. In the evening, we failed to find flat land to put up the



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tents and sat huddled together on a slope around a campfire for warmth. We ate our last bit of food and finished off the last bottle of liquor. But, still we had not found a trace of the C-53.

Success on the Fifth Day

After a heated debate on the fourth day, we eventually decided to discard some things and travel light down along a mountain stream towards civilisation at a lower altitude. The team walked quickly down the dark valley; by nightfall we came to an abandoned highway at the foot of the mountain and settled down in a lumberjack's small frame house for a meal of rice and wild vegetables. As luck would have it, we also met the person sent by the local government to guard the plane after it had been discovered. He had come down the mountain to buy rice.

On the fifth day, we left our remaining luggage behind and took only the video and photographic equipment to return up the mountain. Guided by the guard, we started another round of climbing and finally came to the C-53 by 1 p.m.

The Spirit of Discovery

When Mr. Hanks had at last succeeded in his long-awaited dream, he touched every piece of the plane. He even entered the cockpit and skilfully played with the various meters, seemingly wanting to make it fly again. Apart from a right-foot leather shoe, no other remnants of the three crew members were found.

Looking at the plane, all sorts of feelings welled up in Mr. Hanks' heart. "Most people like to read history," he said. "In fact, everyone's life is a sort of history. I myself feel very young and I'm still writing my history. Our experience in this expedition is also an episode of history, an episode that should be included in history books." Suddenly Mr. Hanks turned very philosophic, and the words that poured out like a poem moved us. He continued, "In the war years, you had no time to talk about your feelings. Even when your dearest friend died, you

went on to do what had to be done as if it did not happen: everyone seemed to be in coma. I am not good with feelings. Yet, there is always something that makes you enamoured. The longer the time

passes, the more unforgettable it will be. Now looking back, I understand about feelings. You just don't know what your feelings are without the passing of time. Over the past five decades, I never lost my confidence in finding this plane. After this perilous adventure, I know I was right."

Finally, I came to understand this old man, his feelings and his spirit.

A Salute to the Lost Crew

In front of this half-century-old piece of history, we held a simple but solemn ceremony. Representing us all, Mr. Hanks presented a bundle of fresh mountain azaleas for the heroes who had laid down their lives for a just cause. "Fox! Fox!" Mr. Hanks called out the name again and again. Our heads were down in silent tribute as the two frontier guards raised their rifles and fired shots that echoed in the mountains for a long time.

When the plane crashed, Jim Fox was only 24. Now, his name has been carved on a memorial tablet in a secondary school's playground in his hometown, Dalhart, Texas. There, everybody knows his name. In China where he laid down his life, more and more people have come to know his story. His and the other two Chinese crew members' names were carved on the War of Resistance Against Japan Monument in Nanjing. Regrettably, however, we know little about the families of the two Chinese.

Did they ever know what had happened?

A Survivor, Not a Hero

We have seen Mr. Hanks accomplish his life-long dream. In our minds, he is not only a hero of the war in which justice had finally triumphed over evil half a century ago, but also a great old man — a man who displayed all the wisdom, strength and virtue man has accumulated, like the old man depicted by the famous American writer Ernest Hemingway in the novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. "I'm not a hero. I am only a survivor," he said.



Translated by Li Zhenguo

1. Emotionally, Mr. Hanks touched every part of the plane.
2. Working out a plan to search for the lost plane
3. The bouquet of azaleas represents our respect for the heroes.
4. There was no path in the wild mountains.
5. Mr. Hanks paying tribute to another fellow pilot died in this area in WWII







Qikou

An Ancient Ferry Crossing
on the Yellow River

Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

Qikou is an ancient town on the Yellow River. It suddenly regained its former prosperity. Many artists, writers, film and TV producers come to create their works. Tourists visit the grand houses of ancient times. The town is most lively on the first day of the seventh lunar month when a temple fair is held at the nearby Black Dragon Temple.

When I arrived at Qikou at the end of the sixth lunar month the bus had to stop on the outskirts due to a sudden flood in the Qiushui River, which lies southeast of the town. I had to walk on a suspension bridge several kilometres from town to cross the river.

I stayed at the small but exceptionally clean Yuelai Inn. The boss of the inn, Mr. Li, was a very hospitable man, and he volunteered to be my guide. After breakfast the next day, Mr. Li took me on a street tour to see the former prosperity of this ancient town.



Mansions of Wealthy Merchants

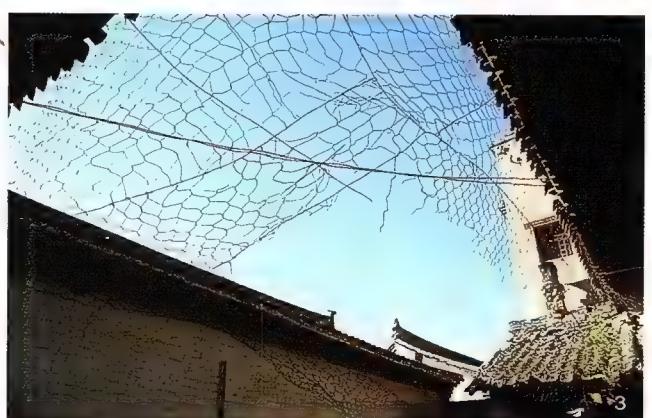
The big courtyards are all built like a stronghold with tall and thick walls and watch towers. Some of the smaller ones are even covered with wire nets which have copper bells attached for protection.



A Divided Town

In the past three stone slab streets existed in Qikou, which also used to be a much bigger town. Due to the frequent flooding of the Yellow River, only parts of them remain now: one half-side street by the river, about a kilometre long, now called Xishi (West Market) Street; and a 2.5-kilometre L-shaped street, which runs first north to south, as Zhongshi (Central Market) Street, and then turns east, becoming Dongshi (East Market) Street.

We spent a whole day walking along the street from west to east. I discovered the town was mainly divided into two parts. In the northwest by the Yellow River are mainly big shops and warehouses and there are few residential houses. The small stores, other service trades and residential houses are mainly in the southeast by the Qiushui River.



Fortress Courtyards

The solid stone embankment on Xishi Street's riverside is reinforced with buttresses. A stone path leads down to the town's sole port. Lining the street's east side are large courtyards with huge gates and high walls as well as a small number of shops.

All these courtyards have bases of long stone slabs. The brick cave houses are either flat-topped or have sloping roofs covered with tiles. They are mostly independent and were built with several-storey cave dwellings. The outer walls are high and solid, built defensively. Some of the courtyards, with huge gate towers and battlements, resemble fortresses. With six or seven caves to a row, this type of courtyard is called the "40-cave courtyard". Two typical examples are the Rong Guang Dian and Fen Jin Lou. Despite war damage and weathering, these cave courtyards are basically in good shape.

'Oil Flows in the Streets'

I searched for descendants of the former owners of these mansions, but failed. At No.19, Xishi Street, in a big courtyard formerly called Fu He Dian, Ding Wenlan, a 75-year-old granny told me not to waste my time. Most of the merchants were from Fenyang or Wenshui counties. These wealthy business people coming to Qikou from the east never became permanent residents and they did not bring their families here.

I visited about a dozen of these fortress-like courtyards. When asked what was their use, the answer was mostly "oil shop" or "oil mill". Mr. Li said that in the early 1950s some caves were still packed with big urns and jars to hold cooking oil. Even now, heavy oily stains can be seen on the floors, doors and windows of the caves; deep troughs were ground on the gate frames by the pack baskets carried by mules. The local folks have an old saying: "In Qikou, oil flows in the streets." The great number of merchants in town doing wholesale and transport business in oil testifies to the town's prosperity from this ancient trade.

Silver Collected by All

Another old saying also reflects the town's past prosperity: "In Qikou and Liulin, every family owns a lot of silver. Even those claiming not to have any, have at least a few boxes." Such was the affluence of Qikou people around the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and the initial stage of the Republic.

The most affluent businessman in Qikou at that time was Chen Maoyun. He had businesses scattered all over Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces. Qikou's elderly all remember him well. They said that Chen Maoyun amassed such a huge fortune from his oil business that it could sustain several generations. One of the stories says that in the early years of the Republic, as he was negotiating on the oil trade with the local oil producers in Baotou, Inner Mongolia, another oil dealer slipped in an order for all the oil in town. Chen countered by buying up all the basket oil containers within a diameter of several dozen kilometres. With no way to transport the oil he had bought, the other dealer had to apologise to Chen by inviting him to dinner and offering him half of the oil he had bought in exchange for the containers.

Copper Bells for Defense

Generally speaking, the structure and decoration of the smaller courtyards are more daintily designed. Perhaps worrying about their lower outer walls, the owners of smaller courtyards usually built more solid gates. Some even covered them with wire nets which had copper bells attached. Courtyards protected in this way look like gigantic cages for birds.



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Previous page (big): Xishi Street is the main street for the bigger businesses.

Previous page (small): The Yellow River on a misty morning.

1. Rong Guang Dian was one of the major shops in the past. For its many caves, it was called "40-cave courtyard".
2. Thieves breaking into the courtyard would surely sound this "alarm bell".
3. The courtyard of the Qiushui Cotton Cloth Shop was protected by a wire net attached with bells. On one side of the gate a watchtower was built.
4. One can only go through an arched door and walk along a passage to enter the courtyard.
5. One cave dwelling courtyard of Chen Maoyun, once the wealthiest merchant in town
6. On top of the old caves of an oil mill, there are carved-brick walls, blue-tile eaves and stone-carving decorations of animal heads and cloud patterns, leaving the impression of wealth.



6



The Story of the Black Dragon

Since then, whenever there was a drought, the villagers prayed to the Black Dragon. Later, at the suggestion of the neighbouring villages, a temple was built for worshipping the Black Dragon.



Although Zhongshi Street is short, it is lined with well-kept Qing-style shops. One compound at its eastern end, with a shop in front and a courtyard at the back, was used by the Xi'an Film Studio for over a month while filming *Shooting Twin Lanterns*.

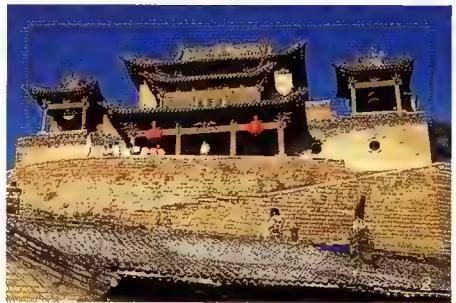
The shops along the quaint-looking Dongshi Street offer all sorts of goods, including general merchandise, native produce, farming tools, medicinal materials.... In addition, there are also restaurants and inns. This normally quiet street livens up considerably on market days — the 5th, 15th and 25th days of each lunar month.

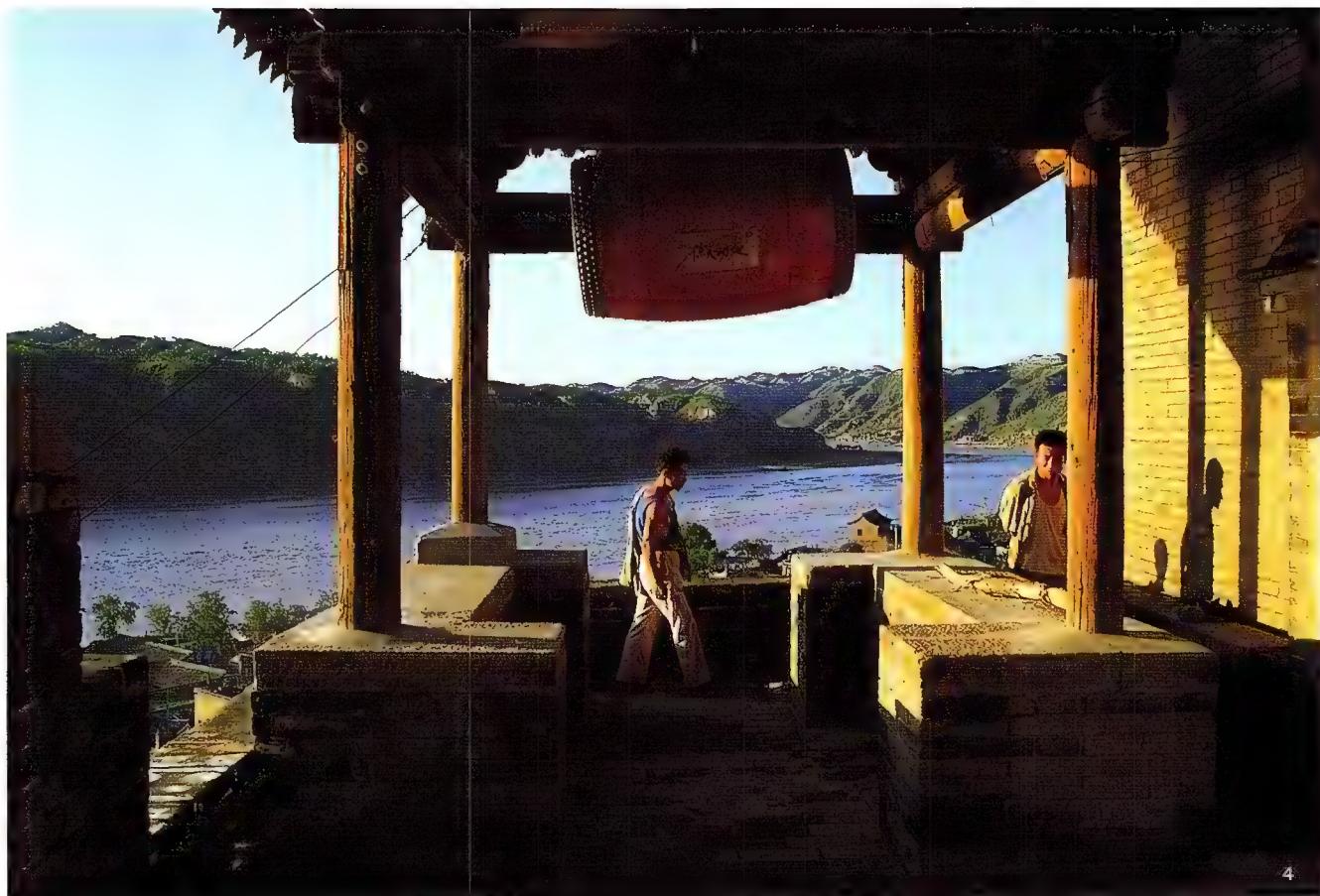
The Black Dragon Orphan

In the afternoon, I followed a stone trail to the Black Dragon Temple nestled in the Wohu (Lying Tiger) Hill to the northeast of the town. This Qin-dynasty temple was built to commemorate the "Black

Dragon God".

Local legend says the Black Dragon was a native child of Qikou, born in a mountainous village east of town. His parents died early and he lived with his aunt and uncle. While his uncle was kind his aunt disliked him. During his uncle's long business trip, a serious drought befell the Qikou area and crops dried up. Using the drought as an excuse, his aunt refused to give him anything to eat. Having no means of survival, the boy of 11 or 12 years of age committed suicide by jumping into the Yellow River. The villagers pitied the boy, and with the increasing starvation, some even thought of following him. To their surprise, one day, Black Dragon came into several villagers' dreams and told them not to be silly, and that there would be rain because he was with





4

them. People were amazed, and suspecting the boy might have turned into a celestial being, they took steamed buns and incense to the spot where the boy drowned himself. At the two deep footprints left by the boy by the riverside, they prayed, and soon after, the rain fell on their fields. Later on, whenever there was a drought, the villagers would pray to Black Dragon and their prayers never failed. Eventually, the neighbouring villages discovered this secret and suggested that they unite to build a temple for the Black Dragon so that he could protect a larger area. So with resources pooled from nine villages and the Qikou Town, this Black Dragon Temple was built.

The Watermelon Rind Temple Fair

From the platform in front of the temple, grey-tile residential houses dotted with green trees and red flowers could be clearly seen. The Qiushui River flows peacefully while the Yellow River surges past near Datongqi. Under the setting sun, this unique scene looked even more beautiful. On the temple gate were two couplets that offer the best description of Qikou's past prosperity: "Abundant goods and crowds of people bring into being a minor capital; River sounds and mountain colours form elements of a great essay; Great mountains and rivers call together men of letters; Auspicious winds and rain bring in abundance and harmony."

In the temple, a makeshift stage with red-cloth curtains was put up for a Shanxi Opera troupe which had been invited in. In the dim evening light, I returned to Dongshi Street and saw it was packed with a large number of trucks, tractors and motor tricycles carrying various kinds of goods, electrical products and daily necessities. Yet there were more

watermelons than goods that had been shipped in. In a short while, all the empty ground on the street was filled by huge piles of watermelons. Smiling, Mr. Li told me, "We locals call the Black Dragon temple fair the 'watermelon rind fair' and you will see how the entire town is littered with watermelon rind tomorrow."

Everybody Was Buying or Selling

Very early the next morning, loudspeakers were blaring. All the streets of the town were bustling with activity: shop owners putting up signs and arranging their inventory outside; people in the restaurants kneading dough, cutting up meat and washing vegetables; the local villagers hurrying to the market with melons, fruit and vegetables just picked from their fields; and visiting peddlers sorting out their goods, handicrafts and medicines in empty spaces between shops. In general, everybody was busy and excited, hoping to make a profit during the temple fair.

I followed several women carrying baskets full of fresh vegetables

1. A mural in the Black Dragon Temple depicting the Black Dragon bringing in rain
2. The magnificent Black Dragon Temple, which is meticulously structured
3. The front gate of the Black Dragon Temple
4. The Bell and Drum tower is an ideal place to have a panoramic view of the Yellow River.
5. The statue of Black Dragon God, which is lit by red lights on the stage outside



Gathering for the Temple Fair

Mountain folks were proudly walking through the street, leading their horses, mules and ox, all of which were decorated with red ribbons and tassels. On the highway along the river, more people were walking towards the town. At the ferry, villagers from the mountains were getting ready for the Yellow River tours.



to a morning market which turned out to be quite a big one. Crowded with sellers and buyers, it offered all the vegetables one normally sees south of the Yangtse River. In this remote place on the Loess Plateau of northern China, it was a surprise to see such a unique scene.

Sitting on the dam close to the fair, I waited patiently for a long time. To my disappointment, few people came. Firecrackers were set off at the Black Dragon Temple half way up the mountain and I went there in a hurry, but did not see many people there either. The old temple guard told me that most people, needing time to travel the mountain roads, would only arrive late in the day.

Neighbouring Province People Cross for the Fair

By 11 a.m. the town had suddenly become alive. A great many white awnings were hung up over the Dongshi Street, shading it completely from the sun. Shops displayed their inventories outside in the open, making the narrow street even more crowded. Suddenly, I heard shouts and the whips cracking down the street. It was a group of mountain villagers proudly leading their horses, mules and ox, all of

which were decorated with red ribbons and tassels. I struggled through the crowds to Xishi Street and saw the scene by the Yellow River was even livelier. On the highway along the river, the line of people swarming into town stretched a few kilometres long. In

addition, crowds also gathered at the sandy beach on the opposite side of the river, waiting to be brought across by the five or six motorized boats. Group after group of Shaanxi villagers as well as their livestock and goods came into Qikou from the opposite side of Yellow River. At the dock another huge crowd gathered to go on Yellow River tours in two temporarily refitted travel boats.

Old Temple Immersed in the Performance

By noon, smoke filled the air at the Black Dragon Temple where pilgrims gathered and devoutly burned incense to worship the God of Fortune, sought help from the legendary ancient doctor, Hua Tuo, and made sacrifices to the Black Dragon.

Drums and gongs announced the beginning of the performance. Everyone was immersed in the old but tragic story of Qin Xianglian, a woman of great virtue, who had suffered great hardship to raise her two children and take care of her parents-in-law, but was abandoned by her heartless husband after he was assigned to a high position. The temple fair seemed to have brought the town back to its past grandeur. ☐

Translated by Z. G. Li

Tips for the Traveller

Transport: Two buses go from Shanxi's capital, Taiyuan, to Qikou daily. The entire trip takes about six hours.

Food and Lodging: In Qikou Town, there are a number of plainly equipped hostels and small restaurants. Prices are low for both.

Black Dragon Temple Fair: Held on the first day of the seventh lunar month every year.

Extended Trip from Qikou: One can cross the Yellow River at Qikou to go to northern Shanxi and visit Yan'an, which was the "Red capital" of the revolutionary base founded by the Chinese Communist Party, and the Great Wall at Yulin. Trains go from both these cities to Xi'an.



Brief History of Qikou

Qikou, which is located on the eastern bank of the Yellow River which divides Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces, is one of the four famous towns in Linxian County, Shanxi Province. Its name is derived from its location as a crossing at the estuary of the Qiushui River that flows into the Yellow River (*kou* means crossing) and its proximity to Datongqi (*qi* means sand bar). Qikou became a ferry port by which Shanxi merchants crossed the Yellow River to go north to Shaanxi. As early as in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), shops and inns were here. In the early Qing Dynasty, Qiushui River floods destroyed Houtai Town, about 1.5 kilometres north, and the Yellow River submerged Quyu Town, 15 kilometres away. Hence, business people moved to the relatively calm and accessible waters of Qikou. Eventually, Qikou developed into a major business centre. Later, with commerce well developed, Qikou earned its name as a water and land transportation centre. Before the construction of the Beijing-Baotou Railway, grain, cooking oil, fur, salt, caustic soda and medicinal materials produced in Gansu, Ningxia and Suiyuan (formerly a province in China) were shipped to Qikou for distribution. Meanwhile cotton cloth, silk and ceramic goods were brought in from Taiyuan, Fenzhou and other places to Qikou via land routes by mules and camels for shipping to these northwest Chinese provinces. Because of its flourishing business, the Fenzhou Prefecture governor set up a tax collection station in Qikou in 1850. By 1929, the number of businesses in Qikou exceeded 300. Every day, more than 100 ships berthed here, with over 1,000 people working as porters. More than 3,000 pack animals carried the goods to and from town. Seven major hotels were in business. Even Kong Xiangxi, once minister of finance of the Kuomintang government, opened a branch company of his business here. Later, due to development of land and railway transport, shipping business on the Yellow River declined. Moreover, the Japanese invasion during World War II also caused grave destruction to the ancient town of Qikou.

1. The performance of traditional local opera pushes the atmosphere of the fair to its height.
2. The big stone bed in this cave dwelling is built with flue pipes inside to heat it in winter.
3. This stone mill and roller, more than half a century old, are still in use today.
4. The Yellow River winds past the Xishi Street of Qikou Town.
5. In summer, the riverside turns out to be an ideal place to cool off at dusk.
6. Qikou Port, which links highway transport with water transport



6



CAO XIUYUN AND HER GOLD FOIL CARVINGS

Photos & article by Li Youxiang

Cao Xiuyun can cut thin, shiny gold foil into a 20-metre long scroll. Seeing her marvellous works, people are very much surprised; some are even suspicious, wondering if she has a computer to help her. Once Cao bought a piece of gold foil by mistake, and cut it to pass the time. Never did she expect the effect to be so good.

Pondering over Paper-cut Since Childhood

Cao Xiuyun was born into a family with little influence of art. Her father was a

what she was drawing. Once, her father came back from work with a perturbed mind and shouted at her: "Can you eat out of your painting?" In a rage he threw her painting onto the roof of the house. But after her father left, she quickly climbed onto the roof and retrieved her paintings.

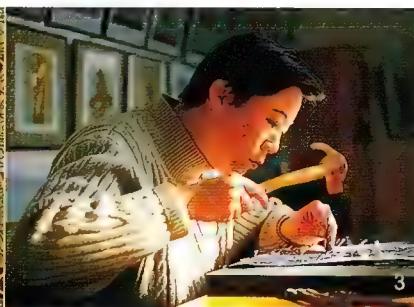
Learning from Folk Artisans

Once Xiuyun followed her mother to visit her grandmother. It so happened that some artisans were painting a wall in the village. At the request of the owner of the house, these

influential paper-cut artist. Once, a poster about an art competition was put up in the school. Cao Xiuyun was very excited seeing it. She hastened home and made 50 paper-cuts that night. Early the next morning she put them on the art teacher's desk. Wang Malin immediately accepted her as a member of his art group. When Cao Xiuyun was 15, her paper-cut *Harvest* was sent on an exhibition tour in five European countries.

Three Treasures

Those who are familiar with her know that



railway maintenance worker, who had to support a family of nine. Among the five children in the family, Cao Xiuyun was the only one fond of painting. She started pondering over the matter since childhood. In winter she leaned on the window to watch ice flowers from early morning till those relief sculptures created by nature were melted away by sunshine. In the evenings she lay in bed to look up at the "maps" left by leaks on the paper ceiling of her room, her thoughts drifting with fantastic images. In the wilderness, when she looked up to watch the floating white clouds, she would imagine that the clouds were flocks of cattle, sheep or camels running in the sky.

While still a child, Cao Xiuyun liked to lean on the small square dining table of her family to draw pictures. She kept drawing on and on, although she herself had no idea

artisans could paint on the spot upon their own imagination any figure from the classical novel *A Dream of Red Mansions* or popular local operas. Watching these artisans working, Cao Xiuyun could not help itching to have a try herself. She took up a brush and tried, and to her surprise, she painted well. During the time she stayed at her grandmother's place, she went out everyday with the artisans to paint walls from household to household.

A Masterpiece Created at the Age of 15

After entering middle school, Cao Xiuyun, 13 years old, wanted to join the school's art group but couldn't because she had no money to buy painting brush and paper. The teacher, Wang Malin, a graduate from the Beijing Art Academy, was an

she has three treasures. The first one is a motorcycle, the indispensable transport means she relies on when she go sketching. Her second treasure is a hammer made out of a tree trunk she got from the wilderness, which she uses in her paper cutting. The third treasure is a dog figurine sent to her by a friend. When Cao engravings gold foil cuttings late in the night, the dog keeps her company. ☐

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

1. A 20-metre-long gold foil cutting scroll
2. The meticulous gold foil cuttings are as thin as hair.
3. The little wooden hammer and engraver are the basic tools Cao Xiuyun uses in her gold foil cutting
4. The Emperor on an Inspection Tour
5. A Fishergirl



Guyuexuan Snuff Bottles

from an Imperial Kiln

Photos by Zhai Dongfeng Article by Liu Heping

The snuff bottle is a special container for storing snuff, a kind of finely powdered tobacco. Its supplements include the tobacco plate, funnel, bowl and pick. Snuff is made by removing the stems from tobacco leaves, pounding the leaves into a fine powder and adding perfume and borneol to it. Readers of the famous Chinese classic *A Dream of Red Mansions* will remember that when one of the servants, Qingwen, had a stuffed-up nose, the young master, Baoyu, gave her some snuff, and a few sneezes cured her. Thus we can see its common use.

Snuff Bottles of the Imperial Court

Guyuexuan snuff bottles are one of the many brands of snuff bottles. There used to be three different types: porcelain roughcast, bronze roughcast and glass roughcast. The Guyuexuan snuff bottles of today are mainly of glass roughcast, which are also called "enamel-painted snuff bottles with glass roughcast". Made by the Qing imperial court, they originated around 1715 during the reign of Emperor Kangxi and rapidly developed in the later years of the Qing Dynasty in terms of quantity, shape, pattern, the art of painting and theme, and workmanship. Production of Guyuexuan snuff bottles continued through the late period of the Qing, but it eventually declined both in quantity and quality.

Blessings and Protection

Enamel paint is a kind of powdered glass. It is not an easy task to use it to draw pictures on glass roughcast. The powdered paint must melt when fired in the kiln, and at the same time the glass



roughcast must not deform or break down. In order to achieve the three-dimensional effect of a picture, a good Guyuexuan snuff bottle needs to be painted and fired several times. Craftsmen in the old days all set up an altar to burn incense and pray for blessings and protection before they started to make a bottle.

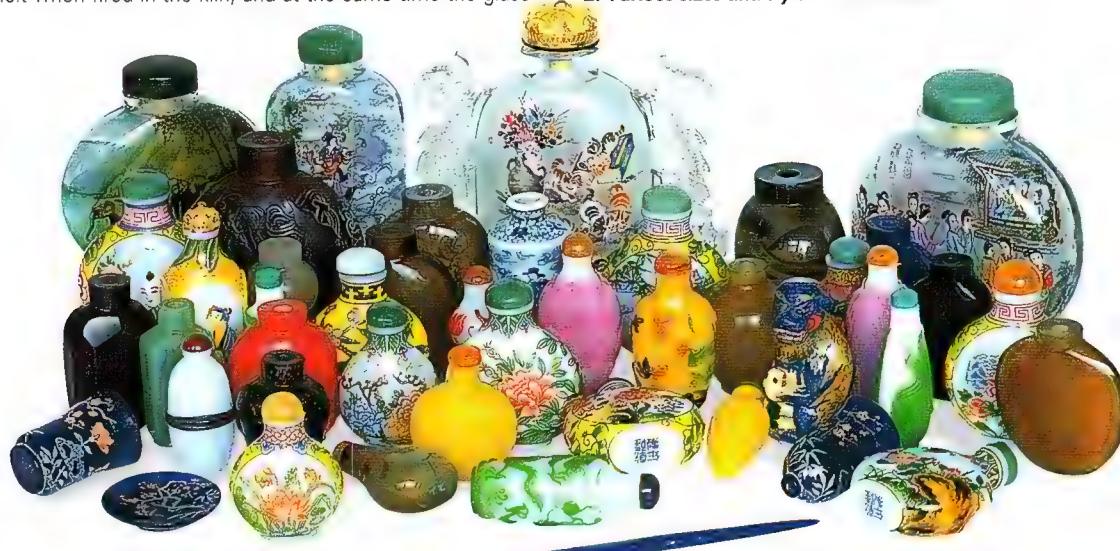
The Imperial Kiln Manager

There are different assertions about the origin of Guyuexuan. One of them holds that a man in Suzhou by the name of Hu Xuege built up a small kiln to produce exquisite porcelain snuff bottles and named it Guyuexuan. When Emperor Qianlong toured southern China, he saw the exquisite porcelain snuff bottles produced by this kiln and loved them. He took their maker back to Beijing and appointed him the manager of the imperial kiln and called the snuff bottles he made "Guyuexuan". Today, Guyuexuan has become a synonym for the enamelled snuff bottles of glass roughcast.

As Guyuexuan snuff bottles originated from the imperial kiln, most of their paintings take auspicious themes such as "Quail, Chrysanthemum and Maple Leaves" (living and working in peace and contentment), "Peony and Chinese Bulbul" (living in wealth the whole life), "Nine Quails and Chrysanthemum" (living in peace for ever), "Lotus Flowers, Catfish and Carp" (having good harvest every year) and "Longevity Peach".

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

1. Inside these snuff bottles are painted important Chinese and foreign figures such as Qi Baishi, Mrs. Thatcher and Beethoven.
2. Various sizes and styles of snuff bottles



ANSHUN Folk Opera

Photos by Zhong Jintang Article by Man Di

Last autumn, when the vast central part of Guizhou Province turned into a fascinating beautiful scene, I drove together with a few friends along the Guiyang-Huangguoshu Highway to Anshun, where we visited the world-famous Huangguoshu Waterfalls and the Dragon Palace, observed how batik was made, studied the Dunbao history and culture, and finally, at Wanzizhai, watched the unique and enticing ancient performing art — Anshun Folk Opera.

Anshun Folk Opera, locally known as "Tiaomi Huashen" or "Tiaoshen", is an ancient opera derived from the Nuo Culture, which consists of military training, memorial

ceremony and recreational activity. It is different from the Tujias' Nuotang Opera in Sinan and Dejiang, the Yis' Cuotaiji Opera in Weining, and the Dong opera in eastern Guizhou. Generally, this opera is performed in mid-July when rice is blossoming, or during the Chinese New Year. At those times, households invite opera troupes to perform so that both humans and gods can enjoy them; it is an effort to use the gods' power to welcome in the good and drive away the evil.

According to research, Anshun Folk Opera was formed from a military activity to welcome the god who drove away pestilence — a practice originated from Ming-dynasty when

Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang sent soldiers and immigrants from the north to the south to reclaim the wasteland and strengthen the defence of the southwestern border. Today, with over 600 years of history, it is popular mainly in the villages inhabited by those immigrants' descendants, though it also exists in some hamlets of the Buoyei and Gelao groups.

There are more than 300 theatrical troupes in Anshun Region. Generally, each village has one theatrical troupe, and each troupe has its traditional repertory. Most repertoires are stories about the loyal, upright military generals who fought bravely in ancient times. The Anshun Folk Opera has a complete set of patterns, strict plots, and fixed dialogue and music. With a unique style and great value for



study, it is known as "the living fossil of drama history".

When we got to Anshun, it was the off season. However, our hospitable hosts organised a special performance for us in Wanzizhai, a village five kilometres from Anshun. This Gelao village has over 100 households and 600 people. Most inhabitants are surnamed Yang and Zeng and earn a living by farming. Their clean and tidy houses, all built of white flagstone, create the image of a snow-covered mountain from a distance. When we arrived, the performers, all in opera costumes, came to welcome us at a small dam in front of the hamlet. The nine performers began immediately with the opera of an ancient battle called *Western Expedition —Taking Suoyang Town for the Second Time*.

The performance proceeded through three



steps: opening the trunk and welcoming the gods; god dancing; and cleaning up and sending off the gods. The first,

also called "inviting the masks", is a ceremony held before the performance. It begs the gods to drive away evil spirits. To the local performers, the mask is the most important prop; once taken out into the light, the god's soul enters it. So the masks are the gods, and the gods are the most outstanding deceased civilian officials and military officers. Before opening the trunks containing the masks, the performers must stand solemnly at the trunks and burn incense and paper gifts to pay respect to the gods. The order of wearing the masks is very particular — the good characters are worn first and the bad ones second; the leading characters first and minor ones second. The masks are classified into five types: civilian, military, old, young and female, and are in red, white, black and yellow. Red represents loyalty and bravery; black, uprightness and resoluteness; and white wickedness and craftiness. Strangely, there are no women performers in Anshun Folk Opera; all female characters are played by men. Librettos are divided into two parts: one part for individual singers and the rest a

chorus. The music is very simple and unsophisticated; the singing is vigorous and resounding, with only gongs and drums for musical instruments.

After the trunk was opened, the god dancing began. With masks and armour, carrying battle flags and wielding swords, the performers each came forth to recite an introductory passage about their roles. Then the drama unfolded. The performance consisted of "civilian acting", meaning singing, and military acting with acrobatic fighting. With singing combined with fighting, it was very free, forthright and unadorned. Although it was a simple performance conducted

in a square many people came to watch with great interest. Amidst the deafening sound of gongs and drums, the performance took on a serious air.

The performance lasted for an hour and a half. At the end, a ceremony was held to "clean up and send off the gods". The performers, still in costume, stood in two rows to recite poems to welcome the auspicious and drive away the evil. Then the head of the troupe held up a rooster and touched its cockscomb softly at the mid-eyebrow point of each performer to help them revert back from being a "god" to their original beings. Then the rooster was slaughtered, and incense and paper gifts burned to thank the gods and send them off. It was only when all was done that the performers took off their masks and costumes and put them back into the wooden trunks to conclude the whole affair.

The performance season of the Anshun Folk Opera usually lasts for three to five days at least and sometimes a fortnight, and during that period other colourful folk cultural activities are also held. Though what we saw during our visit in Anshun was nominal, we nevertheless enjoyed its quintessential and artistic charm.



1. The image of a warrior
2. The village square is the outdoor theatre.
3. A ceremony must be held before the opera is staged.
4. The various characters in the opera *Western Expedition*
5. Anshun Folk Opera masks are colourful and eye-catching.



Cave Burial of the Miao in Guizhou

Traditions for handling the remains of the dead are quite different from place to another throughout the world. Cremations and burials are the most common ways, while celestial and tree burials, as well as hanging coffins, can only be found in areas of ethnic people. Recently I discovered a kind of cave burial rarely seen in other places.

This type of burial is a custom of the Miao found in Guizhou Province. At present, three million of the Miao, about 60 per cent of the total population of this minority people in China, live in Guizhou, disregarding the fact that the Miao are not the aborigines of the province.

It is said that the ancestors of the Miao originally lived in the Yellow River valley, and Shennong was their first ancestor. Due to their defeat in wars and other reasons, these people were forced to move southward, one generation after another to take refuge in mountainous areas. However, for centuries, they were dreaming of returning to their ancestors' home. Hence the custom of the cave burial.

I rode southward from Guiyang, the capital of Guizhou, along a highway zigzagging up a mountain. After more than an hour the 48-kilometre ride ended up at Huaxi District, the site of the Gaopo Miao Township Government located on the highest altitude of the area. Then we changed to a jeep arranged by the local government. Continuing south for 19 kilometres we arrived at a narrow basin at 1,500 metres above sea



level surrounded by luxuriant mountains. Led by the guide we walked along a path winding up a mountain. Next, we threaded through a corridor with a tree-leafed covering and came out at the other end to face a large entrance to a cave. Called Longda Cave, it is the most representative site of the Jiading Miao cave burial.

Twenty metres high, 10 metres wide and about 40 metres in depth the cave contains more than 100 coffins of various sizes. Densely arranged in special order, each coffin is hung by two thick wooden racks in the shape of a Chinese character “井”, and with earthen pots for containing funeral offerings placed at the front. According to the guide, those with the head facing the entrance of the cave belong to the descendants of the eldest sons of the families, while those with the feet, to the descendants of the youngest sons. This suggests that some come in and others go out in the hope that the tribal tree will never die out, instead, they will have a flourishing population.

The cave is believed to have a history of 600 years from the day when the coffin of the first occupant, Xiang Luo, a

Miao chieftain was placed. His descendants had been cherishing a hope that one day they could escort the bier of their forefather back to the Central Plains, their original home. Since then this unique burial of the Miao has been handed down to this day.

It is dry and spacious inside the cave and so the atmosphere is not ghastly and there is no peculiar smell in spite of the den-

sity of the coffins. There are strict rules for receiving occupants into the cave: They must be over 60 of the same clan with noble character and high prestige. This cave has been listed by the local government as one of the district-level protected cultural relics.

Visitors to this site can embark on a bus to Huaxi from Guiyang. The departure station is by the gate of Dashizihe Riverside Park at the city centre. The bus departs when it is full and the fare is two yuan for the journey of 17 kilometres. After arriving at the Huaxi Station you can change to buses bound for Gaopo Township. The 31-kilometre distance costs four yuan. Then from there change buses again to Jiading. It costs another two yuan for the 18-kilometre distance. However, passengers going to Jiading are often very few so the bus departure is irregular. In case of this you can hire a chartered car from Gaopo or seek help from the local government. More often than not, you can have your wish fulfilled.

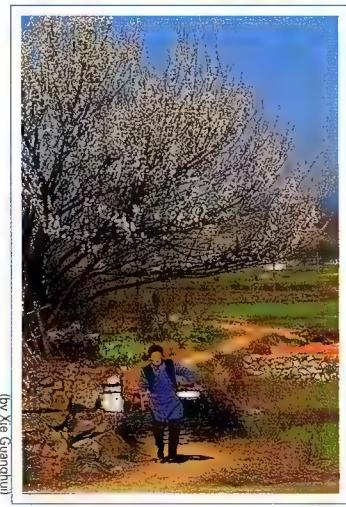
Translated by K. V. Ku
Photo by Deng Qiyi
Article by Sun Chonggui



*Yunnan is going to host the grand **World Gardening Expo'99** in May in Kunming, the city of flowers. In the special feature of the coming issue, we will present to you the highlights of this*

marvellous exposition of verdure, the extraordinary travel routes offered by this captivating yet mysterious province inhabited by various minority people, the newly-developed "environmentally friendly" scenic areas... In brief, there must be something that will suit your taste.

*On the vast expanse of gobi desert lying on the Hexi Corridor in Gansu Province stand the ruins of the ancient **Suoyang City** and **Ta'er Temple**. There, the love story of the gallant Tang-dynasty general Xue Dingshan and his wife Fan Lihua has been spread far and wide, adding an air of romance to this solitary place.*



*This is the time of the year many travellers and photographers like to go for a journey in the region south of the Yangtse River, where the climate is pleasant and vegetation is flourishing. We will introduce **four distinctive travel routes in southern China**, from which you can pick your favourite one to relax in this lovely season. Detailed and practical travel information and tips are provided as well.*

English Edition

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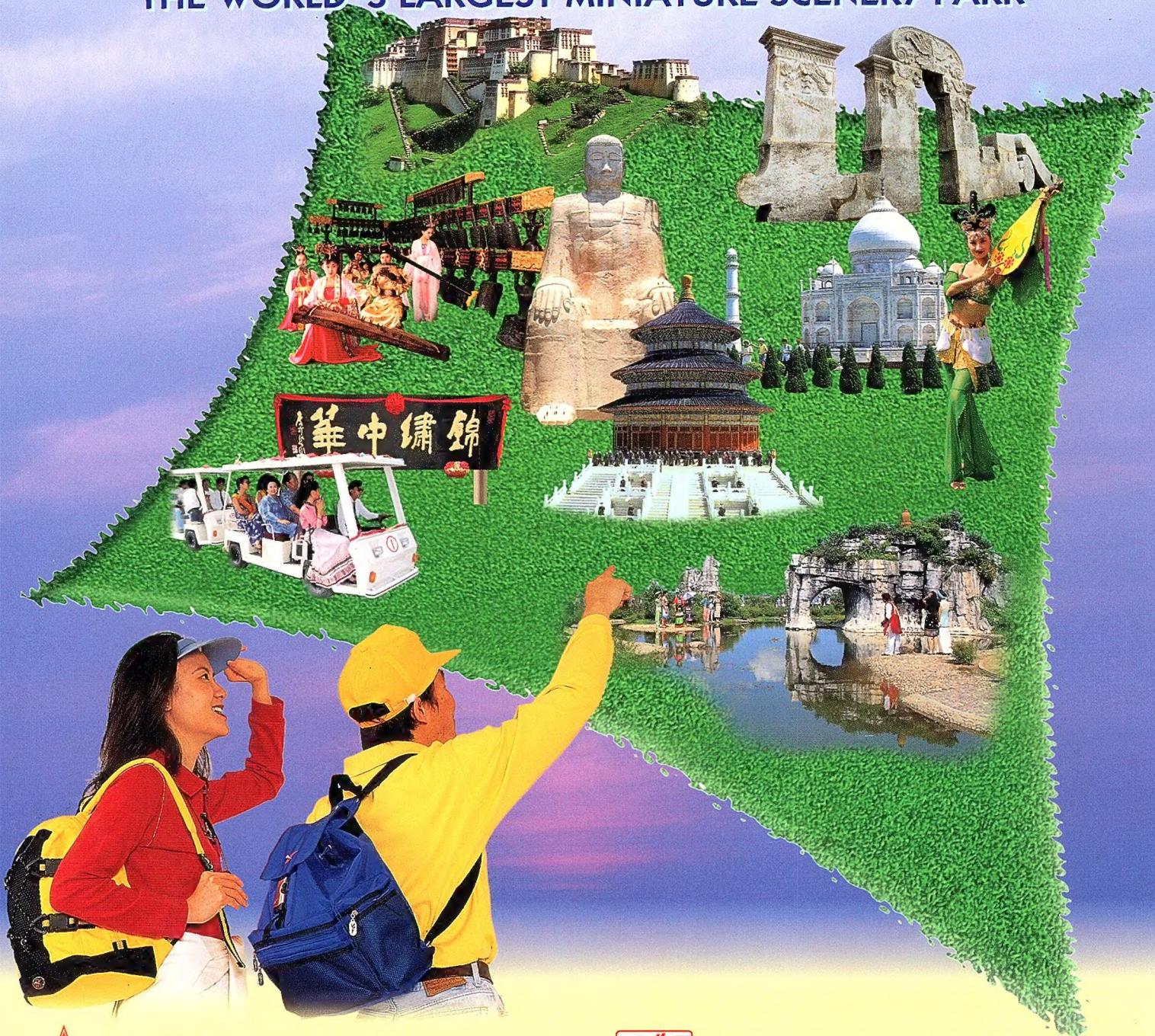
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